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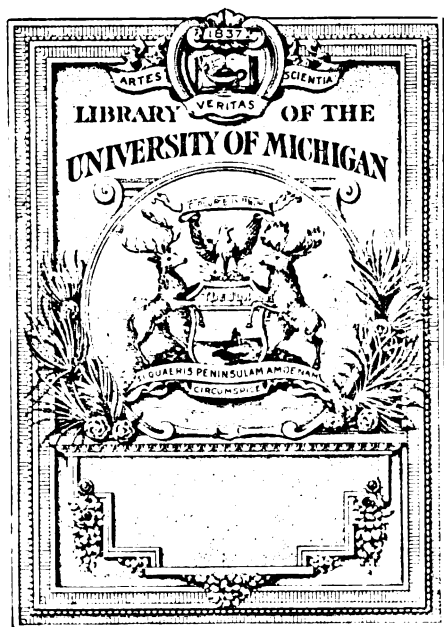
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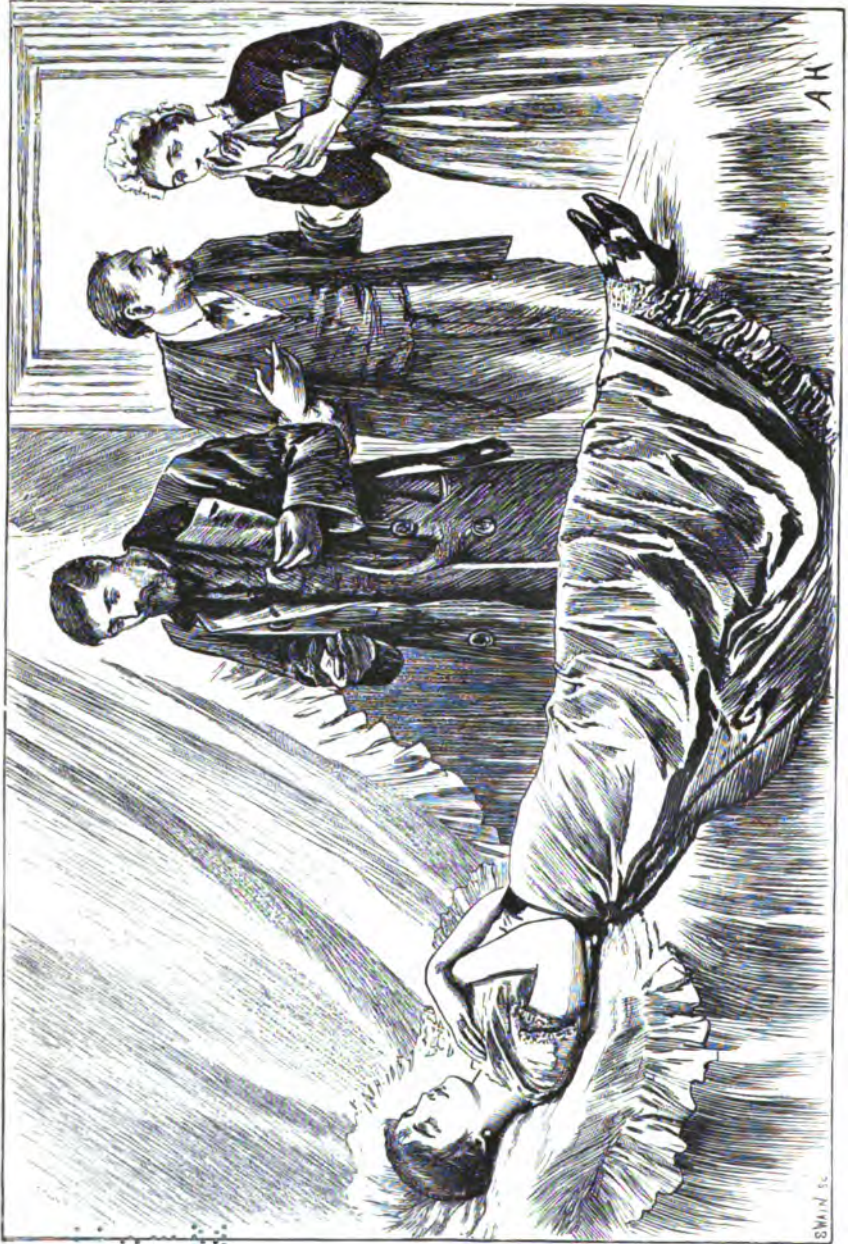
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'You have done everything you could.'

U. of M.

BELGRAVIA

AN

Illustrated London Magazine

VOL. XLIII.

NOVEMBER 1880 TO FEBRUARY 1881



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BELGRAVIA.

NOVEMBER 1880.

A Confidential Agent.

BY JAMES PAYN.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE LAWYER AND THE MAJOR.

IT was before the days of twin ships and of the *Calais-Douvres* that Mr. Frank Barlow took his departure to Paris by way of Folkestone; but even if those admirable scientific inventions had been in existence, it is doubtful whether they would have much availed him against the effects of a sea voyage. His nature was averse to range, and he had never tempted the waves before except in the floating bridge between Gosport and Portsmouth; and we all know what the ocean does with a new-comer. It receives him much as a midshipman's mess in old times was wont to receive one from his mother's apron-strings. When Mr. Barlow set foot on Boulogne shores he was in that pitiable state that he almost made up his mind to take out letters of naturalisation and become a Frenchman for evermore, rather than recross the Straits. Nor at the buffet of the railway station did he find anything better adapted to recover the tone of his stomach than ratafia cakes, small sticks of chocolate, and very large cruet-bottles of vinegar and oil. Soup, indeed, he contrived to procure; but as it consisted—no, it had no consistence—as it was obviously composed of hot water with melted butter in it, it benefited him very little.

Years afterwards, when speaking of this unique experience (for he never left his native land again), Mr. Barlow was wont to remark that though in foreign travels he often saw in the flesh what had apparently been boiled for soup, he never beheld those soups which those rags at some remote period must have made. On that long, uninteresting route to Paris it also struck him how very few English folks could ever be got to take it, and how they

would inveigh against its tedium, if it only happened to be in England. At one station he was so fortunate as to procure some oranges, the only food familiar to him, and therefore in which he had any confidence, at half a franc apiece. But the pangs of hunger compelled him subsequently to procure some little cakes, which turned out to be made of the same substance that is used at home for giving to dead rabbits the powerful aroma that fits them to be a 'drag' for a pack of hounds. Suffering, then, from a distressing combination of aniseed and *mal de mer*, and we may add *mal du pays*, Mr. Frank Barlow arrived in Paris and took up his quarters at the Louvre. He was not sorry to find that Major Lovell was for the present elsewhere, since an opportunity for recruiting himself was thus afforded him; and having taken advantage of it and addressed a short note to the Major requesting an interview upon a subject of importance, he awaited events with his usual confidence and serenity of mind.

The same evening he received a few lines from the Major expressing his willingness to see him, and was at once ushered to his apartment on the third floor.

It was scarcely possible for two men of the same race, age, and position in life, to have fewer things in common with one another than Frederick Lovell and Frank Barlow. With the latter we are already acquainted: an uncompromisingly honest fellow, devoted to his profession and his mistress; strictly moral and genuinely though unenthusiastically religious; a very favourable specimen, on the whole, of the middle class to which he belonged. Socially the two men stood nearly on the same level, but the surroundings of the Major had from the first been of a more aristocratic kind; his parents had died early, and he had been placed by his uncle and guardian at a public school, and from it at once entered the army. He had had, therefore, very little education, while he had been left to himself altogether as to moral training. His father had been a man of fashion, and used to be known in circles of which Barlow *père* had known nothing as 'Caterpillar Lovell.' The sobriquet arose from his possession of an insect of that description which he was wont in the days of the Regency, when such eccentric bets were common, to back for a great deal of money to escape from a soup-plate, in the centre of which it had been placed, more quickly than any other caterpillar. The pretty creature was a fortune to him, until some one discovered that its celerity arose from the fact of the plate being a warmed one, when that source of revenue ceased.

He left little behind him; but Frederick had great expectations from his uncle, a bachelor and a man of science. His weakness

was astronomy, and he possessed the largest telescope and the tallest observatory in his native county. When important transits were expected, his lawn used to be laid out with pegs and ropes in illustration of the phenomena about to take place in the celestial regions. On one occasion, when Master Frederick was at home for the holidays, he disturbed these scientific arrangements to make room for a game at bowls, and in replacing them mixed up Jupiter and Venus in a very compromising and improper manner. This interference with the stars and their courses cost him his inheritance. The greater part of his uncle's wealth went to endow scientific research, while he himself remained a poor man with expensive tastes, and little beyond his good looks and captivating manners wherewith to make his way in the world. Nevertheless, he had never ridden in an omnibus; nor stayed at an hotel, even in Paris, without indulging himself in a private sitting-room. He was in his own apartment now, lying on the sofa, with a cigarette in his mouth and *La Vie Parisienne* in his hand, when his visitor was announced. He rose at once, with an inclination of his head that contrasted very favourably with the other's stiff and embarrassed bow, and motioned him to a seat.

'Mr. Barlow, I believe?'

'Yes; I have ventured to call upon you on a matter of great importance, and about which, as I understand through Sir Charles Pargiter, you can give me information. It is with respect to Matthew Helston.'

A flush came over the Major's somewhat delicate and pallid features. 'Do you come on Sir Charles's behalf?' he inquired.

'No, sir; I do not. I am a lawyer.' He hesitated for an instant.

The Major bowed with even greater courtesy than before, but also with more coldness. His experience of gentlemen of the long robe (and he did not understand the nice distinctions of the legal profession) had been very unfavourable.

'My object in coming to Paris, Major Lovell, is in the first place to discover the whereabouts of Mr. Helston; and in the next place to recover the missing diamonds.'

'You are acting on instructions from Mr. Signet, I suppose?' returned the other. 'However, that makes little matter, as from a note I got from Sir Charles this evening it seems their interests are now identical. Well, I'm sorry I can't assist you, Mr. Barlow. I do not know where Mr. Helston is, and need not say that I am in equal ignorance as to the diamonds.'

'And yet I understood that you had seen Mr. Helston.'

'No, sir, I have not; and, to speak frankly, if I had I should not

feel justified in giving you any information respecting him. You will say, perhaps, that it is the duty of every man to further the ends of justice. I do not dispute it; but I also claim to exercise the right of private judgment. I cannot oblige you in this matter.'

'You speak of private judgment,' said Mr. Barlow; 'may I inquire if it is not some private and personal feeling which is actuating you in thus refusing to assist me? I am aware—though, as I believe, you are strangers to each other—that years ago circumstances brought you into a certain connection with Matthew Helston.'

'They may or may not have done so, sir,' answered the other haughtily, 'but at all events they afford no subject of discussion with a stranger.'

'Still, though I have read that when one man has wronged another it is a temptation to him to do him further hurt, I can scarcely imagine any person of honourable feeling who, finding his defeated rival under foot, would designedly assist in crushing him. I am here, I confess, as Matthew Helston's friend. I wish to do the best I can—which, alas! can be but very little—for him. If I could see him, I could, perhaps, persuade him to make some amends for the offence he has committed. At all events, I should know that he was alive, whereas at present his unhappy wife knows not whether he is above ground or not, and suffers extreme anxiety and distress of mind.'

'Will you swear to me,' interrupted the Major suddenly, 'that this and no other is the reason of your making these inquiries?—that you have no motive, such as that reward offered by Lady Pargiter, or as instructions from her or from Mr. Signet, and no covert intention of doing the man an ill turn?'

'So help me Heaven, I have not, Major Lovell,' returned Mr. Barlow earnestly. 'When I tell you that my dearest hope, notwithstanding all that has happened, is to ally myself to one dear and near to him, you may imagine that I am the last person to do him an injury, or—whatever may be my respect for the laws of my country—to bring him to justice.'

'In that case, Mr. Barlow,' returned the Major gravely, 'what information I am possessed of is very much at your service; but it will, I fear, be of small advantage to you. You, however, will be the best judge of that, and therefore I will simply set before you all I know.'

'Would you kindly let me have pen and ink?' said the lawyer.

Whereupon Mr. Barlow was accommodated with those familiar articles, though in a shape under which he scarcely recognised

them; the ink-bottle being an egg in a bird's nest, and the quill pen having beads on its feather and a tassel on its tip.

'I have seen Mr. Helston but twice in my life, and each time only for a few seconds,' began the Major; 'but, from circumstances to which you have alluded, the tidings that he had disappeared with Lady Pargiter's jewels aroused a greater interest in my mind than it otherwise would have done. I should say, by the by, that I was present on one occasion when Lady Pargiter, as it seemed to me, treated him with great indignity, and I pitied the man; and though afterwards he expressed pleasure at a certain misfortune that befell me—it was the loss of a bet—I owed him no grudge on that account, for I felt that he had good cause to be hostile to me. This bet I had made with one Captain Langton; and since it was in his presence that Helston in a manner insulted me —'

'One moment, Major Lovell,' interrupted Mr. Barlow. 'How was it that Helston met you in Captain Langton's company?' That he should have done so struck the lawyer as remarkable, and even suggested that Helston might have had acquaintances such as his friends and family had no idea of, all along.

'Well, the whole thing happened in a moment. We stopped him in his cab one night, thinking him a perfect stranger, in order to decide a bet—or rather, Langton did.'

'Bless my soul!' murmured Mr. Barlow, to whom this proceeding appeared outrageous.

'And that was why,' continued the Major, 'though I should have been silent upon the subject to people in general, I spoke to Langton about Helston after the robbery.'

'Then even at that early date, Major Lovell, you took it for granted he was guilty?'

'Well, it looked uncommonly fishy, of course, from the very first. I certainly never expressed any such opinion, nor indeed did Langton at that time. On the contrary, he suggested that Pargiter, being very hard up, might have laid hands on the diamonds himself.'

'Not in earnest, surely?' said Mr. Barlow, very much scandalised.

'Well, half in joke, half in earnest. Langton is a very queer fellow. I spoke to him, as I now remember, about the robbery because he had at one time expressed a wish to see the diamonds, and, knowing I was a friend of Pargiter's, had asked me to procure him the opportunity.'

'And did you?'

'No; Langton is not the sort of man I should wish to intro-

duce to a friend's house. I put him off with some excuse or another.'

Discursive and apparently aimless as was the Major's statement, there was one portion of it which struck the lawyer's attention in a manner hardly explicable even to his own mind.

'You have hinted,' he interposed, 'that this Captain Langton is not a special friend of yours; may I ask what you know about him?'

'Well, it is very little; he is merely a cardroom acquaintance. He is an unpopular man amongst us; but then he is generally a winner, which may partly account for that. However, some men have a great objection to him—Sir Charles Pargiter has, for one. I remember his saying at the club that he believed he must have committed a murder, and some one replying, "So he has, but it was only at sea"—which, for all I know, may have been the case.'

'Did you know of the robbery in Moor Street at that time?' inquired Mr. Barlow.

'Well, no; how could we? In fact, it must have been just then in course of commission.'

'Did you speak to Captain Langton about it the next day?'

'No; he left England almost immediately, to spend his Christmas in Paris. Our conversation about Helston took place some time afterwards—just after Lady Pargiter had advertised the reward. He said it was offered too late, for that Helston had been in Paris for a week, and had no doubt by that time disposed of the jewels. He even named a diamond-merchant in the Rue de Bris to whom he had offered them.'

'But how came Captain Langton to know that?'

'I have no idea. Langton, however, is a man ready to do a stroke of business in anything; in diamonds as likely as anything else; so that he may have visited the merchant on his own account. As I have said, he is a queer fish.'

'And yet it was upon his testimony, it seems, that you wrote to Lady Pargiter to say that Helston was in Paris.'

'No, not entirely,' said the Major, reddening and hesitating. 'It is true I had not seen the man myself, but I had seen one the fact of whose presence here—taking into consideration Langton's evidence—convinced me that it was so.'

'I do not quite follow you, Major Lovell. Pray forgive me if I seem to press you on what may be delicate ground; but the importance of this matter may be very great.'

'Well, the fact is, I recognised a lady in the street as one to whom Mr. Helston when a very young man was deeply attached, and——'

'You mean Phoebe Mayson?'

‘Yes; Langton told me (I don’t know upon whose authority) that Helston had renewed his addresses to her; that they had, in fact, come to Paris in company. The whole story seemed so probable that I felt it my duty, since Mr. Signet was questioning his claim to compensation, to let Pargiter know how matters stood; but I did it, I do assure you, against the grain.’

‘I am sure of that,’ said Mr. Barlow earnestly. ‘You do not happen to know, of course, where the young person you spoke of is residing?’

‘Most certainly not,’ returned the Major, in a tone which might have been mistaken (by a stranger to him) for one of virtuous indignation, but which was in reality caused by wounded pride.

‘But you can give me the name of the jeweller?’

‘It is either Monteur or Montagne—Langton’s French is very fishy—but the Rue de Bris is a short street, and you will have no difficulty in finding him.’

‘I am greatly obliged to you, Major Lovell,’ said Barlow, rising. ‘You have behaved most frankly.’

‘Not at all, not at all,’ put in the Major. ‘You have my best wishes, not only for the recovery of the diamonds, but for helping your friend out of his scrape—“removing him from the jurisdiction of the Court” is, I believe, the technical expression. Good evening.’

Under any other circumstances Mr. Barlow would have very warmly protested against a phrase which certainly imputed to him very unprofessional intentions; but he was too well satisfied with his companion’s behaviour to find fault with him, and also too full of a certain thought which his narration had suggested to him, to take much note of minor matters. What had obtained possession of his mind was evidently a subject insignificant enough in the present connection in the Major’s eyes, but which in those of the lawyer was growing every moment, though in a vague and dusky fashion, like the Genius of the Bottle in the Arabian Tales; only the shape it took was by no means that of a genius, but of one Captain Langton—a man who had been anxious to get a sight of the Pargiter diamonds, and who, though tolerated, as it seemed, in certain circles of society, was credited with a murder, though only at sea. It was incredible, notwithstanding all that had happened to disturb Mr. Barlow’s views respecting Helston’s character, that such a man as this could have been a friend, and still more a confidant, of Matthew’s. How came it, then, that he should profess to know, not only that he was in Paris, but that he was in possession of the diamonds, and endeavouring to dispose of them?

This weighty question, in connection with certain possibilities

contingent on it, and in combination, it may be added, with the eccentric and unaccustomed movements of the eider-down quilt with which his bed was provided, rendered Mr. Barlow's first night in Paris a very disturbed one.

CHAPTER XLVI.

MAKING INQUIRIES.

It is often stated by those who are good linguists, I scarcely know whether for the comfort of those to whom not only 'the French of Paris is unknown,' but even 'that of Stratford atte Bowe,' or for their disappointment and distraction, that 'everybody in Paris speaks English.' Or, if they shrink from telling a falsehood of that enormous magnitude, they will nevertheless confidently assert that there are plenty of people who understand English in the queen of cities, 'wherever you go,' and that in the hotels and shops at all events 'you will be quite at home.' They do not hint that the conversation of the poor islander during his stay on the Continent must necessarily be of the parrot and phrase-book kind, and that the best chance he will have of that interchange of ideas which is to 'open the mind' so much will be with a waiter. Even with the waiters, however, poor Mr. Barlow did not find himself on a very intelligible footing, while his intercourse with the shopkeepers was like the first rehearsal of a pantomime, in which he had always to sustain the part of pantaloon. The Rue de Bris he discovered, like a navigator, by means of a chart; but M. Monteur might have been M. Tonson, so difficult he found it to ascertain that gentleman's place of residence. He looked, of course, for a shop, never imagining that the place he sought was an hotel with a courtyard resembling a small edition of the Admiralty in Whitehall; and when at last he had made his way thither, and found the proprietor—an ancient personage in a black velvet skull-cap, full of antics, and hung on springs, in a parlour at the back of his premises—he was not certain in his own mind whether he stood in the presence of a diamond-merchant or of a monkey. Upon the whole, indeed, since M. Monteur received him with native politeness—that is, with a profusion of shrugs and jabber—he rather leant to the latter view. As soon, however, as Mr. Barlow made his new acquaintance understand that he was an Englishman, 'Ha, ha! ma fille shall come,' cried monsieur in an ecstasy; and on pulling the bell and giving some orders to the servant, a young lady—indeed, a mere school-girl—but of prepossessing appearance, presented herself to Mr. Barlow's astonished view. It appeared M. Monteur had a

daughter who had resided in the Isle of Fogs and could speak its tongue like a native; and this was she.

After a few words of explanation from the old man, 'You have beezness with my papa, monsieur?' said she in a sprightly tone. 'Vaar good; you tell it to me, and I will tell it to him. Fire away.'

Mr. Barlow stared, as well he might; for the young lady, though obviously enjoying the task that had been set her, looked perfectly serious.

'I have ventured to call upon Monsieur Monteur,' he said, 'in respect to a matter which can hardly be called a business one, but to which, I hope, he will have the courtesy to give his attention. A gentleman in whom I am deeply interested has suddenly disappeared from his wife and family, to their great distress and perplexity, and I am come to Paris to find him. I have reason to believe that he called upon your father some days ago with respect to the purchase of some diamonds.'

This statement having been translated to the merchant, he replied, through his daughter, that a countryman of Mr. Barlow's had, indeed, called upon him in the preceding week, but upon a private matter.

'Not if he knows it,' said the young lady (but with a sweetly apologetic air, as though she had said, 'Deeply as he regrets to refuse you'), will my father geef you any information about the matter unless you show some authority for demanding it.'

At this Mr. Barlow was a good deal cast down, and his face showed it.

'Are you a relative of his who has quarrelled with him for cutting his stick?' inquired the young lady tenderly. She had cheek-bones so high that one really could not look over them to the extent of calling her a beauty, but she had soft eyes and a gentle voice; and if it were not for her inexplicable indulgence in slang Mr. Barlow would have pronounced her essentially feminine. When French people spoke French, they puzzled him; but the way in which this young woman spoke English, amazed and even alarmed him beyond expression.

'I am not a relative of the person in question——' he began.

'Name of Butt,' she put in with quickness, but great gravity.

'Just so; but it is possible—I hope probable—that I may become connected with him.'

'Ah' (lighting up with sudden vivacity), 'you are going to marry his sister! Have you popped?'

This was worse than all; it seemed a positive sacrilege to Mr. Barlow to have his lost love spoken of in this flippant fashion; but then it was so necessary to secure this young person's sympathy.

‘Yes, mademoiselle, I have—popped.’

Whereupon mademoiselle clapped her hands delightedly, and, turning to her father, seemed to appeal to him in Mr. Barlow’s favour. That gentleman, of course, did not understand what she said, but he afterwards compared her winning manner and caresses and flow of words to a rain of sugarplums.

‘My father says you must describe your brother-in-law that is to be,’ said she, ‘before he can furnish you with his address. My papa is a man of business, you see; moreover,’ she added in an apologetic tone, ‘there is no green in his eye. He is a young man from the country, but you cannot get over him.’

‘Indeed, my dear young lady, I do not wish to get over him,’ protested Mr. Barlow. ‘My brother-in-law is a man about my own height; rather more stoutly built.’

‘Eh? Ah, I understand; but I have seen him. Yes, he is stumpy, podgy.’

‘He has short brown hair, and his face is grave.’

‘Yes; that is right—a heavy spirit; or, as you say in England, down upon his luck. He looks as if he had lost sixpence.’

‘He has lost more than that,’ sighed Mr. Barlow. ‘If M. Monteur has still a doubt as to my personal knowledge of this gentleman, I think I can state the nature of the business about which he came. He wished to dispose of certain diamonds—like these.’ And he produced the drawing of the Pargiter *parure* which he had obtained from Mr. Brail.

The merchant took the drawing and examined it with curiosity. ‘Yes, that is right,’ he said in French; ‘we might have done business together, this gentleman and I, only I required certain explanations which were refused me. From what you tell me, my darling, it is probable that they were his wife’s jewels, to which he had no claim. She must have been very wealthy. Well—well, I have sufficiently respected his desire for secrecy. Our visitor, it seems, has a right to what he asks. The gentleman’s address was Hôtel de la Fontaine, Rue du Simon.’

‘You are most kind, mademoiselle,’ said Barlow gratefully, when this news had been translated to him. ‘You have made easy what would otherwise have been very difficult.’

‘Do not mention it, sir,’ returned she gracefully. ‘And do keep up your pecker. Look less like a duck in a thunderstorm, and never say die while there’s a shot in the locker.’

‘Your advice is admirable, mademoiselle,’ said Mr. Barlow; then added, with an irrepressible curiosity, ‘But may I ask where you learnt your English?’

'Yes, yes ; that is what everyone says,' cried she exultingly, ' "Where did I learn my English ?" I speak like a native ; is it not so ?'

'Indeed you do, mademoiselle ; more so, indeed, than most natives.'

'Ah, that is thanks to my two cousins at Rugby College. They taught me the idioms all in the Christmas holidays, at the house of their mother. Yes, I speak *vaar* good English. Right you are. I believe you, my boy.'

What could Mr. Barlow do ? She was so perfectly unconscious of her linguistic defects, and so blissful in her possession of them, that it would have been a cruelty to undeceive her ; he could only take her hand—having received the politest of bows from M. Monteur—and wish her good-bye, which he did most cordially.

'Ta, ta,' she said with all the ingenuous delight of a child who is exhibiting its accomplishments ; 'ta, ta, and take care of yourself. Permit me to jerk the tinkler, and the slavey will show you the way out.'

Mr. Barlow was deficient in humour, and serious thoughts were oppressing him, yet he could not avoid being amused by this artless girl. The confidence which her father exhibited in her command of the English tongue, extending as it did even to matters of business, and the obvious pride he took in it, had tickled him in spite of himself. But when the *concierge* closed the house-door behind him, it seemed to shut him out from gaiety and good humour, from laughter and lightness of all kinds, for evermore. Attorney though he was, Mr. Barlow had a tender conscience, and he reproached himself for having given way even for a few moments to that sense of the ridiculous which is one of the few possessions of man unshared by the lower animals. The tidings he had just received, and of which he had been in search, were, indeed, full of gloom ; and if he had ventured for some hours to entertain the glimmer of a certain hope, they had extinguished it. It was true that he had omitted to show M. Monteur the photograph of Matthew, but the verbal description he had given of him had evidently tallied but too well with the merchant's recollection of the man, whom, moreover, the assumed name of Butt identified beyond doubt with Helston.

And now he was about to be brought face to face with him in his infamy and disgrace ; not to know the worst—for the worst he knew—but to awaken, if possible, in one whom he had once believed to be without reproach some sense of his own ignominy, and to suggest, not amendment and repentance, for they were impossible, but a tardy and probably partial reparation.

It was curious, considering the whole situation, how much he thought of Matthew *per se*, and of the ruin he had brought upon himself as well as upon others. He had broken the law; he had sinned against morality; and committed, in short, every trespass calculated to awaken indignation in the mind of a man of Barlow's character; and yet he was unable to divest himself of a certain yearning pity for the man, as well as of a profound regret for his degradation. But of course Sabey and Amy occupied the chief share in his thoughts. What kind of message, he wondered, would he have to give them from this unhappy wretch, and how would he, the bearer of it, be received on his return? This last consideration, all-important as it was as respected his own interests, affected him, perhaps, just now the least. The Present loomed so large and gloomily in front of him, that for the moment it shut out the Future.

He took a *fiacre* to the Rue du Simon, but alighted at the corner of the street. He felt a strange disinclination to precipitate matters, and preferred to pass house by house on foot till he came to the hotel of which he was in search. How would he feel, what would he know, thought he to himself, when he should issue from that door through which he was about to enter? Which of us has been so fortunate as not to have pictured to himself the like, and have imagined what the state of our mind will be to-morrow, or the next hour, or the next minute, after some important and perhaps painful ordeal? Have we not ourselves stood outside our mistress's door, or our creditor's, or that of some other petty Providence of our fate, with similar feelings? Ay, and but too often with the same sad forebodings (God help us all!) that, whatsoever change may be in store for us, it can hardly be for the better.

It was positively with some sense of relief, though Mr. Barlow had undertaken his journey for no other object than that which seemed to lie immediately before him, that he reflected that Matthew might not be at the Hôtel de la Fontaine after all. When the reward for his apprehension had been made public, was it not probable that he had changed the address given to the diamond-merchant, and betaken himself to safer quarters? For, though he could not be identified by means of the name he had assumed, he might be so by the jewels themselves.

The Hôtel de la Fontaine was one of considerable pretensions, and it struck Mr. Barlow's practical mind that, if Matthew Helston had resided there ever since his coming to Paris, one at least of the Pargiter diamonds must have been disposed of to defray his expenses. That he should have chosen so ambitious a place of

residence at all was utterly inconsistent with his old habits of economy, but why should they have remained to him when every other rule of his life had been negatived and overturned?

The courtyard of the inn was open to the street, and over the left hand of the gate was the porter's lodge, to which Mr. Barlow at last advanced with a determined step and inquired for Mr. Butt. There was a board in the lodge containing the names of the occupants of the hotel, with a star against those who had passed the gate that morning and left their names with the *concierge*.

Mr. Butt, it appeared, had done so, for that official (who could speak English) replied that Monsieur was not within.

'Do you know when he will return?' inquired Mr. Barlow.

The *concierge* did not know. As a rule, Mr. Butt left the hotel after breakfast and did not return till midday. 'Madame, however,' he added, 'was in as usual.'

To Mr. Barlow, albeit far from an imaginative man, that 'as usual' had a great significance. He read in it—that is, in the fact of her being usually left alone—a story of satiety and repentance. Matthew, he suspected, had already become tired of the object of his guilty passion, or had failed to find in it a Lethe balm against the stings of conscience.

'Did Monsieur wish to see Madame?'

The question startled him not a little, for, among all the embarrassing positions that had presented themselves to his apprehension, he had certainly never contemplated a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Phoebe Mayson.

Still, was it not possible that there had been a reciprocity of disillusion?—that the girl might herself have repented of her bargain, and be not indisposed to release herself from such ties as bound her to the runaway? If he could persuade her so to do, it struck Mr. Barlow—though, it must be confessed, with considerable vagueness—that he would be advancing Sabey's interest. In any case, by an interview with this young woman he might obtain some information respecting Matthew's true position.

'Yes,' he answered, with a sudden impulse, 'I will see the lady.'

Whereupon a waiter was summoned, who conducted him to Mr. Butt's apartments, which were on the third floor.

CHAPTER XLVII.

WITH PHEBE MAYSON.

HAVING brought Mr. Barlow to the door of No. 53, the waiter discreetly left him there to proceed as he thought fit, for which that gentleman hardly knew whether to be grateful or otherwise, the business on hand being such a very delicate one. However, the more he thought about it, the less, he felt very sure, he was likely to like it; so he knocked gently with his knuckles. There was no answer, but he heard a rustle of silk, as of some one rising hastily from her chair; then he knocked again more sharply.

‘Come in,’ said a female voice in English.

The next moment he stood in the same room with the speaker, but not face to face with her. She had been sitting, as he conjectured, by the door, but had hastily moved away at his summons and retired into a recess near the window, where she stood in shadow. A tall, slight woman, but of shapely figure, with a great deal of fine brown hair—much lighter, it struck him, than Amy’s—and a pair of beautiful eyes marred by tears. The tears were not standing in them, but had only just been swept away, and their traces, notwithstanding the precaution she had taken, were distinct enough to him.

‘Your business, sir?’ she inquired sharply, in a tone of annoyance rather than of alarm, though she looked frightened also.

‘It is with Mr. Butt,’ said Mr. Barlow.

‘My husband is not in. Did they not tell you so at the gate?’

‘Yes, madam; but they could give me no other information—such as when he would be likely to return, for example—so I ventured to come up.’

‘I know nothing of Mr. Butt’s movements,’ she said stolidly.

‘If you have any message for him, however, you can leave it.’

‘Just so. That is what I wish to do. May I take it for granted that you are aware of his object in coming to Paris?’

She hesitated and changed colour; her eyes glanced round the little sitting-room, as if in search of something that might be lying on chair or table; then answered, ‘No, sir; I know nothing of Mr. Butt’s business matters.’

‘You know at least, however, that the name he now passes under is not his real name?’

‘That can scarcely be *your* business, sir,’ she replied haughtily, and drawing herself up to her full height, She was certainly very

beautiful ; more so by far than her picture made her out to be, though at that moment, being *posée* and so far not herself, she resembled it more than at first. But its expression of gaiety and *abandon* was altogether absent from the original ; she looked careworn, and wan and pale, except for the flush of anger that his question had called into her cheek.

‘Pray forgive me if I appear rude, madam,’ continued Mr. Barlow. ‘My mission is so urgent.’

‘Still, it can hardly concern *me*, sir,’ she put in.

‘Pardon me, but it does, madam, at least partly. I am come here on behalf of one whom both of you have wronged, though not, indeed, in the same proportion.’

‘I have wronged no one.’

‘Not wilfully, madam, let us hope ; though it is difficult for one to believe that you are unaware that Mr. Butt, as he calls himself, is a married man.’

‘Married ! How dare you say so ? It is false.’

She spoke with passion, but not, as Mr. Barlow thought, with that natural indignation which a woman who had really been deceived would have exhibited. Indeed, now he came to think about it, it was hardly possible that Phœbe Mayson, however cut off by her own act from her former life and its sources of information, could have been ignorant of Matthew’s marriage.

‘Unhappily, madam, it is true. You have been the cause, even though it be the unconscious cause, of the desolation of a happy household, of the desertion of a loving and most trustful wife.’

To his surprise, she uttered a shrill and scornful laugh. ‘That is too much,’ she said. ‘You are exceeding your instructions—I know now from whom you come.’

‘If you do so, madam, there is no need for bitterness, but for pity—and, I must add, for contrition. It is a poor triumph to exult over the pure and innocent ; and, if I am not mistaken, will be a short-lived one.’

‘Are you an actor ?’ she exclaimed contemptuously. ‘Or are you a madman ?’

‘My name is Frank Barlow ; shall I tell you what was yours before you became Lucy Mortlock or Mrs. Butt ? It was Phœbe Mayson.’

She had advanced a step or two in her excitement, but now shrank back into the recess again ; her limbs trembled visibly and her voice shook as she replied, ‘What if it was ? What is that to you or anybody ?’ The last word had a pitiful touch in it which did not escape the other’s ear.

‘To me, indeed, nothing,’ he replied, ‘but everything to her

whom you have wronged. If you were anyone but Phoebe Mayson, who won his first love and cast it from you, neither your beauty nor any wiles at your command would have sufficed to steal her husband from her. As it is, taking advantage of that treacherous weapon, you have pierced her heart with it. Nay, more, you have not only seduced him from his home and the true hearts that loved him, but you have been the cause—is it possible that you cannot know it?—of his forsaking the path of honesty and disgracing his name and nature. Yes, woman, it lies at your door, and no other's, that Matthew Helston is a thief.'

'Matthew Helston!' She clasped her hands to her bosom and stared at him in wild amazement. 'Matthew Helston!' she reiterated. 'What do you know of him? or rather, what lies are these you have heard about him and dare repeat to me—to *me*? Matthew Helston a thief! He is an angel! He is a man without a fault, except that years ago he trusted to a woman's word. I thought myself debased and shamed beyond all human creatures,' she exclaimed with sudden vehemence, 'but you, you slanderer and blasphemer! you are viler yet.'

Mr. Barlow answered nothing, but quietly took from his pocket a newspaper containing the offer of the reward for Helston's apprehension, and pointed to it with his finger.

'It is a lie,' she muttered between her teeth; 'he never took those jewels.'

'How do you know that?' inquired Mr. Barlow quietly. 'Have you any evidence to prove the contrary?'

'I know it because I know *him*,' she answered. 'Evidence! Do you think a man who has been scorned and cheated, and forgiven—'

'One moment, madam,' interposed the lawyer earnestly. 'You are altogether in error in supposing that I wish aught but good to Matthew Helston; nay, if it were possible, I would not *think* aught but good of him. I am here on the behalf of him and his. If you too wish him well—'

'Wish him well!' she echoed, clasping her hands together. 'I would give—though that, indeed, would be a worthless gift—my very life to serve him.'

'I know not whether you *can* serve him, madam,' returned the lawyer gravely, 'but it is possible. There are passages in his life, it appears, of which those who thought they knew him best are ignorant. If you will, you can throw light upon them, and in so doing, it may be, cast a gleam on what is at present the profoundest mystery. He has been lost to wife and child and friends for many days; and with him, as you read, have disappeared these

jewels. It was my own impression—now, I perceive, a false one—that he had fled with you to France.’

‘With me? No, no, sir,’ she answered in a gentle, piteous voice. ‘He has been good and kind to me, but his love for me is dead. How should it be otherwise, since I am base and vile, and he of all men knows it best? It might have been at one time. Look you, a man thirsts—sees a fair and running brook, but cannot reach it; later on and lower down it becomes accessible enough, but, since it has run through muddy ways, he turns from it with loathing. So it was with him and me. I never loved him as he should be loved, for I was never worthy; but for the sake of the old times, and though all was soil and sin with me, he took compassion on me. There was a man, no matter who, for whom I forsook him. After a little this man grew tired of me and cast me off—as I deserved. Then I fell lower and lower. Once, lately, Matthew Helston saw me in the street and spoke to me—words that he meant for kindness, but which were coals of fire. He was but poor himself, yet he offered me help—which I refused—to lift me from the mire. But I took my own way. This man who calls himself Mr. Butt offered me marriage. To be the wife of even one like him (God help me!) was promotion. Why, you are asking yourself, should he have conferred it on me? I did not put that question to myself, but had I done so I should have answered that I had still attractions for eyes like his; that no honest woman would have married him, and that to those of the baser sort I was superior in many ways. Not a very exalted estimate, you will say, of my poor merits; yet it seems I had appraised them far too high. He went through the form of marriage, indeed; but I have reason to know that it was null and void; and so far (I say it, though a woman—so you may judge what I have suffered) I am thankful to him.’

Her tone throughout was one of the deepest humiliation and despondency, save when she spoke of the man passing as her husband, when the memory of recent cruelty and insult seemed to rouse a momentary bitterness.

Mr. Barlow, though scandalised, was touched. Whatever sins this woman had committed, he felt she had been punished for them.

‘If this man is not your husband,’ he said gently, ‘you can escape from him. If my advice can be of any service—or you require the means to return to England—’

‘I thank you, sir,’ she said, with less of gratitude, however, in her tone than of self-contempt; ‘but what becomes of me is a small matter. We were speaking of Matthew Helston.’

'True; I was in hopes that you could tell me how this Mr. Butt was in possession of the fact that Helston was in Paris and endeavouring to dispose of the jewels. That it is so I have reason to know, since I have just come from M. Monteur, a diamond-merchant——'

'In the Rue du Bris?' interrupted the other.

'Yes; how did you know that?'

'Mr. Butt has been there on business, to my knowledge.'

'Indeed! On what business?'

'I believe to sell some family diamonds. That is what I thought you came about. There is something amiss with them, I'm certain. I thought they might be lying about the room when you came in, which frightened me.'

'Have you ever seen them?' inquired the lawyer quickly.

'Yes; Mr. Butt showed them to me quite recently.'

'Are they like these?' inquired Mr. Barlow, producing the drawing of the *parure*.

She shook her head. 'I cannot tell,' she said; 'they have been taken out of their setting; that is what first aroused my suspicions.'

'You say, "first aroused." Did anything afterwards confirm them?'

'Well, I cannot say they were confirmed before you put your questions. This man, however—my husband, as he is called—has been nervous, fidgetty, and, I think, alarmed of late. He receives many telegrams which seem to annoy him. He is out, as he says, on business, all day long, and returns dissatisfied and disappointed. He was particularly so after his visit to the Rue de Bris. I know he went there, for I waited for him in the cab outside.'

'I think I have it,' exclaimed Mr. Barlow eagerly. 'See here, this is a full-length portrait of Matthew Helston; does it bear any resemblance to Mr. Butt?'

Again she shook her head. 'Not in the least,' she said contemptuously. 'It is Hyperion to a Satyr.'

Mr. Barlow's countenance fell. 'Please, however, to describe the man.'

'He is of middle height and rather stoutly built. His hair is brown; his expression, as I have said, dissatisfied and gloomy.'

Mr. Barlow struck his palms together with a cry of triumph.

'It is as I suspected; though unlike to the eye, the descriptions of these two men tally tolerably well. Helston never went to the Rue de Bris, but only Mr. Butt; and Mr. Butt is Captain Langton.'

'It is possible,' returned the other coolly, 'He told me but

yesterday that he married me under a feigned name. Does that throw light on anything?’

‘It does, it does; much light,’ answered the lawyer thoughtfully; ‘but not enough. The question of what became of Helston on that night in Moor Street, even if this Langton is the thief, remains as dark as ever.’

‘Moor Street—Moor Street!’ repeated the other; ‘where have I seen that name before?’

‘Think, madam, think,’ exclaimed the lawyer earnestly. ‘Everything may hang upon your reply.’

‘No, I remember now,’ she said, after a moment’s reflection. ‘I have not seen it, but I have heard it spoken of.’

‘By whom? By Butt?’

‘Yes. He has read a telegram in my presence with Moor Street in it. I feel certain of it.’

‘How came he to do that?’

‘He did not know that he was doing it. These telegrams which are continually arriving seem to excite him strangely.’

‘Can you let me see one of them?’

‘I cannot; he destroys them directly he has read them. But stay—they sometimes come in his absence. I will open the next and let you have a copy of it. I will search his papers; no stone shall be left unturned to aid you in your discovery.’

‘But that may get you into trouble; the man is, by your own showing, a ruffian, and, as we have now reason to believe, in desperate case.’

‘I told you that for Matthew Helston’s sake I would lay down my life,’ she interrupted vehemently. ‘But you need not fear on my account. I am a match for him in wits, and will be careful. That reminds me that he may return at any moment. He must not find you here. Give me your address, and trust to me. Tomorrow morning at latest—perhaps to-night—you will have a line from me.’

‘But money may be wanting,’ urged Mr. Barlow, producing his purse.

‘No, no,’ she cried imploringly; ‘I have a few shillings of my own, which will be sufficient; let me do him what good I can at my own cost. Go, go—and trust to me.’

Mr. Barlow did trust implicitly in her good will to help him. He understood, if he did not wholly appreciate, the woman’s desire to show her gratitude to Matthew, and her devotion to his interests; but of the result he was far from sanguine. That Langton was at all events a participator in the robbery in Moor Street he had little doubt; that the diamonds in his possession were Lady

Pargiter's he was almost certain, since M. Monteur had recognised them; but the proof of this, he felt, would be far from easy. If the girl had still possessed any hold upon Langton's affections, she might, perhaps, have wormed out of him something of great importance; but it was plain that the ill-assorted pair had quarrelled. The man must know that, every moment during which the jewels remained undisposed of, his position was growing more perilous; he was already, she had said, suspicious and alarmed; how was it possible, then, that she could throw him off his guard, so as to obtain from him any information? She had promised to search his effects, but it was very improbable that he would suffer anything of a compromising character to be in existence. If even he could be seized (which he could not, since there was no warrant for his apprehension), and the diamonds found upon him, that would only affect the man himself—it would not bring him (Mr. Barlow) one hair's-breadth nearer to the object of his mission.

He went back to his hotel, locked himself into his room, and set to work to think the matter over; but it surprised himself, considering the strength of the impressions and suspicions which crowded his mind, how very little he could make of them as regarded Matthew. That Langton, indeed, had an object in representing Helston as the thief was evident; but there was no sort of clue to his having any real knowledge either of him or his whereabouts.

In the end he wrote a long and minute account of all that had come to his knowledge since his arrival in Paris to Mr. Brail; and bade him hold himself in readiness to act at once on the receipt of any telegram.

Up to midnight, at which hour he retired to seek the rest he so much needed, no message had arrived for him from Phoebe Mayson.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE VICTIM.

NOTWITHSTANDING his anxieties and the eider-down quilt, Mr. Barlow slept soundly for some hours, and would doubtless have continued to sleep, but for a very curious circumstance. He had been dreaming, of course, of Amy. There were some obstacles to his union with her (quite different from those which really existed), and he had overcome them by running away with her (which in real life he would certainly never have dreamt of), only he had no money to pay the coachman, who was (naturally enough) very impatient.

'I am the coachman,' the man was saying. 'Remember the coachman, coachman, coachman.' When he went so far as to poke Mr. Barlow in the ribs with his whip-handle, that gentleman awoke and found himself in the presence of two soldiers in uniform, one of whom was bringing the rays of a dark-lantern to bear directly upon his half-closed eyes, and the other was addressing him as '*Cochon*.'

'Who the deuce are you?' exclaimed Mr. Barlow with all an Englishman's indignation at this intrusion in his apartment, and especially at a military occupation of it.

'We are here in the name of the law,' was the reply in French. 'You must come along with us immediately.'

One word of this only, '*loi*,' was intelligible to Mr. Barlow, but it helped him to understand that, in spite of their swords and their furious aspect, these men were policemen, and not soldiers.

His hand dived under his pillow and produced a phrase-book and a pocket dictionary, which never left the neighbourhood of his person, and by aid of the former he inquired what they wanted, and what was the matter.

By the aid of the latter he learnt that he was wanted at the Hôtel de la Fontaine, and that the cause was MURDER.

'Great Heavens! it must be poor Phoebe Mayson,' cried he, with a start of horror; 'and that villain Langton must have done it.'

His excitement and indignation were so extreme that the manifestation of them, had he been accused of the crime, would in all probability—duly manipulated by the Judge of Instruction—have brought him to the guillotine; but fortunately the suspicions of the police had not taken this direction.

He sprang out of bed and huddled on his clothes with fingers that trembled with passion, and even with remorse. It flashed upon him in an instant that the poor girl had come to her death at the hands of her paramour, in the performance of the service which he (Barlow) had himself suggested. For the first time in his life—or at all events since he had served his articles—he burst into expressions which were certainly not to be found in his French and English dictionary. The beauty of the woman, the wretchedness of her situation, her tenderness, her resolution (alas! so self-sacrificing) to obtain at all risks some tidings of her lost love, recurred to him with terrible force and distinctness, and stirred his nature to its depths. 'The wild beast of force that lives within the sinews of man' was aroused within him. For the

moment the one wish of this peace-loving, law-abiding man was to find himself face to face with her assassin.

As he passed out of the gate between the two *gensdarmes*, and got into the *fiacre* awaiting them there, the porter exclaimed to himself, 'There goes a murderer! Who would have thought it to have seen him yesterday? Bah! why should one wonder? He is English.'

But even if he had understood him Mr. Barlow would have cared nothing.

'*Est-il mort?*' inquired the poor fellow of his companions piteously, at which they shrugged their shoulders, smiled, and (thinking, of course, from his use of the masculine, that he referred to the criminal) replied, 'Well, not at present. The little knife' (their euphemism for the guillotine) 'does not work quite so quick.'

But, as it happened, poor Phœbe was not yet dead—only dying and speechless, as the Commissary of Police, who was in waiting at the door of the hotel, informed Mr. Barlow in broken English. The criminal was in custody elsewhere, but *pauvre Madame* was upstairs, and wished to see him. He was conducted to the same room in which he had seen her a few hours ago, but which was now occupied by certain official persons. One of them, a *juge de paix*, informed him in English that he had been taking the declaration of Madame, who lay in the inner apartment. A doctor was with her, who would presently summon Monsieur to her bedside.

'Is there no hope?' inquired Mr. Barlow, deeply affected.

The magistrate shook his head. 'She has received half a dozen stabs, each of which, says the doctor, would be enough to kill her. The bleeding has been averted for the moment, but not before she swooned away. *Ma foi!* what carnage—and what beauty! But monsieur knows her?'

Twenty-four hours ago Mr. Barlow would not, perhaps, have felt complimented at such knowledge being imputed to him; but all that was changed now. To his inward eye the unhappy girl appeared—not a saint, indeed, but a martyr. He bowed his head in grave acquiescence, and asked if it was known why the crime had been committed.

The *juge de paix*, a bright little old man, who applied himself to his snuff-box every other minute in a manner that suggested the pecking of a bird, here shrugged his shoulders and held his head and hands sideways, as though he were clasping an invisible Punch's bâton. 'Ah, well, I suppose it was the old story. There was an open desk, and letters strewn about; Madame had been imprudent, and her husband was transported with jealousy.'

‘Permit me to say that your supposition is entirely incorrect,’ said Mr. Barlow quickly. It was offensive to him that this unhappy woman should be thus misrepresented in the very last—and perhaps the best—action of her life. ‘The cause of quarrel was, I have reason to believe, something entirely different. The desk and letters, it will be found, were the man’s, not hers; she was seeking for information on a friend’s account, not her own, which, as I apprehend, this fellow resented.’

‘Resented! *Ma foi!* There is no doubt that he killed her for it. He was a powerful man, and one stab, as I have said, would have been her death-blow; but in his passion he struck again and again.’

‘Great Heavens! How frightful!’ exclaimed Mr. Barlow. ‘How was it, if this happened as you say, that the poor woman could cry out?’

‘She did not cry out, or at least no one heard her. The murderer, having done his work, thought himself quite secure. He had packed his carpet-bag, and would have got clean off but for the police, who in Paris are intelligent, prompt, and vigilant to a degree that is astonishing.’

It was curious, and struck Mr. Barlow with some disgust, that in this anteroom of death his companion should thus discourse so lightly, even to the extent of praising the local constabulary.

‘But, whatever the intelligence of your police,’ he answered grimly, ‘they could scarcely have foreseen the murder before its commission.’

‘True; but it was not on account of the murder that they were here at all; that was merely a fortunate coincidence; they came to arrest the man for another crime.’

‘Indeed!’

‘Yes, for trying to extract money—what is your legal phrase?—well, to extract money under false pretences. He had been endeavouring to palm off upon certain jewellers sham diamonds in place of real ones. Only, instead of catching a swindler, we caught a murderer.’

This tidings, so wholly unexpected, would, under any other circumstances, have both astonished and interested Mr. Barlow; but just now more serious affairs were pressing upon him.

‘How was it,’ he inquired, ‘that you came to send for me?’

‘Well, after the assassin had been secured Madame recovered a little; she gasped out a few words in English, which it was my duty to take down, and they expressed a wish to see you. Moreover, there was a memorandum found upon Madame, addressed to you, which presently——’

Here the door of the inner apartment opened, and out came the doctor with grave face, followed by a female servant of the hotel in tears.

'The gentleman is too late,' he said, with a glance at the Englishman; 'the poor lady is dead.'

For one moment the young lawyer's heart had no room for aught but sorrow and pity; but the next the fate of the dead was forgotten in the interests of the living. 'Has she, then, died in vain,' thought he, 'as respects Matthew?'

'Would monsieur like to step in?' inquired the magistrate, pointing to the other apartment.

Monsieur did not like it—was, indeed, very far from liking it; but he somehow felt it to be his duty to see the last of poor Phœbe, so he followed the other into the room.

She was lying on one of the two little beds with which the room was furnished, with her eyes closed, and but for the extreme pallor of her face she might have been taken to be asleep. The doctor, from reverence or sentiment, had crossed her hands upon her bosom, and the housemaid had placed in them a little waxen flower which had formed the ornament of the mantelpiece. She might have been a saint, poor soul, so far as looks went.

'Things were very different when I first arrived here,' observed the magistrate, after a long silence; 'but, you see, we have put them straight.'

'In our country,' answered Mr. Barlow in his judicial tone (for his tender feelings had got the better of him, and of course he was ashamed of them), 'everything would have been left as it was for official investigation.'

'You forget that the poor young lady was alive, monsieur, and yet could not be moved. I made my notes, and then we set things comfortable for her. We are a nation that cannot under any circumstances forget our politeness.' And the Frenchman bowed, with the palms of his hands outwards, as if in illustration of his remark.

'You have done everything you could for my poor country-woman, and I thank you,' said Mr. Barlow warmly. 'You spoke of some memorandum?'

'Yes; I have it here. I can let you see it, but for the present, of course, it is the property of the Law; that must be our excuse, although it bears your address upon it, for our having possessed ourselves of its contents.'

He produced from his breast-pocket a little note, unsealed, and folded hurriedly together in a triangular form. Mr. Barlow took it, not without a shudder (for it was covered with blood).

'Yes, indeed,' said the other in answer to his look of horror, 'it is the saddest of *billets-doux*. The blood on it is madame's heart's blood. It is torn, too. My impression is that there was a struggle for it, during which she thrust it into her bosom, where we found it. In his rage and fear the assassin, after he had stabbed her, must have forgotten it.'

With fingers that trembled as much with emotion as with anxiety Mr. Barlow unfolded the note, which was literally sodden with blood. The words were straggling, hardly legible, and had evidently been written in great haste or excitement.

'M. H. is still in Moor — No — — — starving. For God's — — haste.'

The blanks occurred in the places where the paper had been torn off.

'Does monsieur understand it?' inquired the Frenchman with great interest.

'Yes, no—that is, but partially. It may be of the greatest importance.'

'And it has also, of course, the very deepest interest for monsieur?'

'Indeed, indeed it has,' sighed Mr. Barlow.

'Then look, sir. In any other case it would have been my duty to retain it; but in such circumstances as these, when the assassin has, as it were, been taken in the very act, I think the law may waive its right. The note is monsieur's.'

'You are most kind,' said Mr. Barlow earnestly. 'In return for such unexpected courtesy I can only say that I shall remain at my present address, at your service, in case my testimony in this unhappy matter should be necessary.'

Then he turned for a last look at poor Phoebe. As he gazed upon the pale sweet face, never more to know remorse or disgrace, he felt something cold placed gently in his hand. It was a pair of scissors. The action would certainly never have occurred to himself, but, thus suggested, he cut off a lock of the dead woman's hair and placed it in his pocket-book.

'Madame is in Heaven; monsieur will consequently meet her again,' said the *juge de paix* consolingly. In his own mind he had not the shadow of a doubt that the blameless Mr. Barlow had been her lover.

(To be concluded.)

Some strangely fulfilled Dreams.

So far as can be judged by ordinary methods of interpretation, it would seem that in the days when the history of Joseph was written, and again in the time of Daniel, no doubt was entertained respecting the supernatural origin of all dreams. Joseph's brothers, according to the narrative, took it for granted that Joseph's dreams indicated something which was to happen in the future. Whether they questioned the validity of his own interpretation is not altogether clear. They hated him after his first dream, and envied him, we are told, after his second: which shows they feared he might be right in his interpretation; but, on the other hand, they conspired together to slay him, which suggests they entertained some doubts on the subject. In fact, we are expressly told that when they conspired against him, they said, 'Behold, this dreamer cometh; come now therefore, and let us slay him,' and so forth, 'and we shall see what will become of his dreams.' Jacob, moreover, though he had 'observed' Joseph's 'saying' about the dream (after rebuking him for telling the story), seems to have taken Joseph's death for granted: 'Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.' Possibly in those days, even as now, dreams were noticed when they were fulfilled, and forgotten when, as it seemed, they remained unfulfilled.

In like manner, when the butler and baker of Pharaoh dreamed each man his dream in one night, they were sad (that is, serious) the morning after: for they could not understand what the dreams meant. But Joseph said, 'Do not interpretations belong to God?' Doubtless this was the accepted belief in the days when the history of Joseph was written. It is singular that the butler, though he forgot Joseph till Pharaoh's dreams reminded him of his fellow-prisoner, seems to have associated the power of interpreting the two dreams with the power of bringing about the events supposed to be portended by the dreams. 'It came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, him he hanged.' It is just thus that, in our own time, persons who believe in the claims of fortune-tellers to predict the future, commonly believe also that fortune-tellers can to some degree control the future also.

Pharaoh's dreams were rather more fortunate to Joseph than either his own or those of the chief butler and baker. (It is note-

worthy how the dreams of the story run in pairs.) In fact, one might be led to surmise that he inherited something of the ingenuity shown by his father's mother—referring to an arrangement, a year or two before Joseph entered the world, in which his mother showed to no great advantage, according to modern ideas. Be this as it may, it was certainly a clever thought of Joseph to suggest that the unfavourable weather he had predicted might be provided against by appointing a man discreet and wise to look after the interests of Egypt. Whom was Pharaoh likely to appoint but the person who had predicted the seven bad harvests? Even so, in these our own times, another Joseph told the British Pharaoh who lately ruled over India that years of famine in India can be predicted, and their effects prevented by appointing a man discreet and wise to look after the interests of India. And it is curious enough that this modern Joseph seems to have turned his thoughts to his ancient namesake, putting forward the idea that the seven good years and the seven bad years were years of many sun-spots, followed by years of few sun-spots. Nay, so strangely do these coincidences sometimes run on all-fours, that the younger Joseph has adopted the idea that the pyramids of Egypt (which were once thought to be Joseph's store-houses) were astronomical instruments. Now, it is certain, though this he has not noticed, that before the upper half (in height) of the great pyramid was set on, the great ascending gallery might have been used all the year round for observing the sun at noon; and that by using a dark screen at its uppermost or southern extremity, and admitting the sun's light only through a small opening in this curtain, a large and well-defined image of the sun could have been obtained without any telescope, an image showing any large spots which might be present on the sun's disc. It would be a pleasant theory (and all the better suited for association with the sun-spot-weather theory, in having no valid evidence in its favour) to suggest that Joseph really ascertained the approach of good and bad harvests by solar observation. His advice was that the fifth part of the land of Egypt should be taken up—that is, stored up—in the seven plenteous years: but the Astronomer-Royal for Scotland assures us that the numbers five and seven are symbolised repeatedly in the great pyramid. Could anything clearer be desired?

But although I have been allowing fancy to lead me far away from facts, I think it may safely be inferred from the story of Pharaoh's dreams that the prediction of good and bad harvests was one of the qualities which the Pharaohs chiefly valued in their wise men, whether magi or astrologers.

The story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is still more singular. I

suppose the usual service expected by the kings of Babylon from their soothsayers included the interpretation of all dreams which had left a strong impression on the king's mind—dreams like the night visions of Eliphaz the Temanite, bringing fear and trembling, making all the bones to shake. It does not seem to have entered into the ordinary course of their duties to tell the king first what he had dreamed (when he had forgotten), and afterwards what the dream might signify. Indeed, though it is not a very uncommon occurrence to forget a dream, yet a dream which has been forgotten does not generally leave a very strong impression, and therefore would not require interpretation. It happened otherwise with Nebuchadnezzar. His spirit was troubled, and his sleep broke from him, because of his dream, but what he had dreamt he could not remember. His action hereupon was somewhat crazy: but we must remember there was madness in his blood. He told the Chaldeans, that 'if they would not make known to him his dream and the interpretation thereof, they should be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dunghill.' This was precisely the way, one would imagine, to cause them to invent a dream for him (he could not have detected the truth very well), and to have devised a suitable interpretation, pleasing in the king's eyes—which to persons of their ingenuity should not have been very difficult.¹

However, we must not further consider these more ancient dreams, but turn at once to the examination of some of those remarkable dreams of modern times which have been regarded as showing that dreams are really sent in some cases as forewarnings, or at any rate as foreshadowings of real events. I propose to consider these narratives with special reference to the theory that dreams which seem to be fulfilled are fulfilled only by accident: so many dreams occurring and so many events, that it would in fact be stranger that no such fulfilments should be recognised than that some among them should seem exceedingly striking.

There is one dream story which can hardly be explained by the coincidence theory, if true in all its particulars. It is related by Dr. Abercrombie as deserving of belief, though I must confess that for my own part I cannot but think the actual facts must have undergone considerable modification before the story reached

¹ A great deal in the art of dream-interpretation for the rich and powerful must obviously have depended on ingenuity in making things pleasant. Thus, when an Eastern potentate dreamt that all his teeth fell out, and was told that he was to lose all his relatives, he slew the indiscreet interpreter; but when another and a cleverer interpreter told him the dream promised long life, and that he would survive all his relatives, he made the man who thus pleasantly interpreted the omen many rich and handsome presents.

its present form. Certainly the case does not illustrate the occurrence of dreams, as a warning, effective or otherwise according to circumstances, for the dream happened simultaneously with the event to which it was supposed to relate. The story runs as follows (Dr. Abercrombie gives the story in a somewhat, but not essentially, different form):

On the night of May 11, 1812, Mr. Williams, of Scorrior House, near Redruth, in Cornwall, woke his wife, and in great agitation told her of a strange dream he had just had. He dreamt he was in the lobby of the House of Commons, and saw a man shoot with a pistol a gentleman who had just entered the lobby, who was said to be the Chancellor. His wife told him not to trouble himself about the dream, but to go to sleep again. He followed her advice, but presently woke her again, saying he had dreamt the same dream. Yet a third time was the dream repeated; after which he was so disturbed that, despite his wife's entreaties that he would trouble himself no more about the House of Commons, but try to sleep quietly, he got up and dressed himself. This was between one and two o'clock in the morning. At breakfast, Mr. Williams could talk of nothing but the dream; and early the same morning he went to Falmouth, where he told the dream to all of his acquaintance whom he met. Next day, Mr. Tucker, of Trematon Castle, accompanied by his wife, a daughter of Mr. Williams, went to Scorrior House on a visit. Mr. Williams told Mr. Tucker the circumstances of his dream. Mr. Tucker remarked that it could only be in a dream that the Chancellor would be found in the lobby of the House of Commons. Mr. Tucker asked what sort of man the Chancellor seemed to be, and Mr. Williams minutely described the man who was murdered in his dream. Mr. Tucker replied, 'Your description is not at all that of the Chancellor, but is very exactly that of Mr. Perceval, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.' He asked if Mr. Williams had ever seen Mr. Perceval, and Mr. Williams replied that he had never seen him or had any communication of any sort with him; and further, that he had never been in the House of Commons in his life. At this moment they heard the sound of a horse galloping to the door of the house; immediately after a son of Mr. Williams entered the room, and said that he had galloped from Truro, having seen a gentleman there who had come by that evening's mail from town, and who had been in the lobby of the House of Commons on the evening of the 11th, when a man called Bellingham had shot Mr. Perceval. After the astonishment which this intelligence created had a little subsided, Mr. Williams described most minutely the appearance and dress

of the man whom he had seen in his dream fire the pistol at the Chancellor, as also the appearance and dress of the Chancellor. About six weeks after, Mr. Williams, having business in town, went in company with a friend to the House of Commons, where, as has been already observed, he had never before been. Immediately that he came to the steps of the entrance of the lobby, he said, 'This place is as distinctly within my recollection, in my dream, as any room in my own house,' and he made the same observation when he entered the lobby. He then pointed out the exact spot where Bellingham stood when he fired, and also that which Mr. Perceval had reached when he was struck by the ball, where he fell. The dress both of Mr. Perceval and Bellingham agreed with the description given by Mr. Williams even to the most minute particulars.

So runs the story. Of course, like the 'well-authenticated' ghost stories, this one is confirmed by a number of particulars which are open to no other disadvantage than that of depending, like the rest of the story, on the narrator himself. It would be utterly absurd to base any theory respecting dreams on a story of this sort. The fact that on the night in question Mr. Williams dreamt about a murder in the House of Commons depends on his own assertion and his wife's confirmation. The details of the dream, the description of Perceval and Bellingham, Mr. Williams's ignorance respecting Mr. Perceval's appearance and the arrangement of the rooms in the House of Commons, these and a number of other matters essential to the effect of the story, depend on 'trustworthy witnesses,' whose evidence has in point of fact never been taken. All these points are like the details which appear in the papers the first few days after the occurrence of some 'tragic event.' They may be true or not, but they are apt to undergo considerable alteration when the witnesses are actually examined.

If we accepted the story precisely as it stands, we should be led to some rather startling results. In the first place, the coincidences are too numerous to be explained as merely accidental. Mr. Williams, or any other among the millions who slept and dreamt on the night of the murder, might be readily enough believed to have had a startling dream about the murder of some member of Parliament high in office. Nor could the triple repetition of such a dream be surprising; for a dream which has produced a great effect on the mind is apt to be repeated. But that the event itself of Perceval's murder should be represented precisely as it occurred to a man who did not know Perceval or Bellingham from Adam, involves a multiplicity of relations which could not conceivably be all fulfilled

simultaneously. We should have to admit, if we accepted the story as it stands, that there was something, I will not say supernatural or preternatural, but outside the range of known natural laws, in the dreams of Mr. Williams of Scorrion House.

Now, the case does not fall under precisely the same category as those numerous stories told of the appearance of persons, at the moment of their death, to friends or relatives at a distance. In the first place, most of these stories are themselves open to grave doubt. The persons who relate them are by their own account of highly sensitive and readily excitable temperament, and we do not look for perfectly uncoloured narratives from such persons. But even if we accept the general theory that under certain conditions the mind of a dying person may affect in some way the mind of a person at a distance who is in some way in sympathy with the moribund, we can hardly extend the theory to include strangers. It may not be utterly incredible, perhaps, that some physical mode of communication exists by which one brain may receive the same impressions which affect another—though I must confess I cannot see my own way to believe anything of the sort. But we can hardly imagine that the brain of a sleeping person in no way connected with a dying man could be affected by such brain-waves. Every story of the kind, truthful or otherwise, has described an impression produced on some dear friend or relative; so that we should be justified in thinking (if we believed these stories at all) that brain-waves are especially intended for the benefit of close friends or near of kin. It would be a new and startling thing if any man might have a vision of any other person who chanced to be dying; and, considering that not a minute passes without several deaths, while there are some 1,500 millions of living persons, scarcely a day might be expected to pass without some one or other of the multitudinous deaths of the day finding some one or other brain among the 1,500 millions in the proper frame for receiving the visionary communication by the brain-wave method.

Nor is it easy to imagine a religiously supernatural interpretation of the story. The dream was certainly not sent as a warning, for when Williams dreamt his dream, Perceval was either being murdered, or was already dead. The event could produce no beneficial influence on mankind generally, or on the English people specially, or the Cornish folk still more specially. The number of persons who could be certain that Mr. Williams was telling the truth (always on our present assumption that this was the case) were very few—in fact, only Mr. and Mrs. Williams, Mr. Tucker, and perhaps one or two friends who remembered that the details of the murder were communicated before the news could

have reached Mr. Williams. One does not readily see how Williams himself was to be beneficially influenced by his remarkable experience. Most of those who heard the story would sit in the seat of the scornful, and receive no benefit, but harm. The idea generally entertained, and most probably by Williams as well as the rest, would be simply this, that if it was worth while to let a miraculous vision of Perceval's murder appear to anyone, it would have been well to have let the vision appear before the event, and to some one not living quite so far from town. Not, indeed, that the warning might save Perceval; for in reality it is a bull of the broadest sort to imagine that a *true* vision of a murder can prevent the murder. But a warning dream might serve useful purpose without preventing the event it indicated. If a man dreamt that he was to die in a week, and believed the dream, he would have no hope from the advice of his doctor, or from any other precautions he might make against death; yet he would usefully employ the week in arranging his affairs. But it could be of no earthly use to Perceval, or anyone else, that a vision of his death should appear in triplicate to some one down in Cornwall on the very night when the tragedy occurred in London.

I imagine that the true explanation of the story is somewhat on this wise: Williams probably had three startling dreams about a murder; told them to his wife in the way related, and on the following morning to several friends. News presently came of the murder of Perceval on the night when Williams had had these dreams; and gradually he associated the events of his dreams with the circumstances of the murder. When six weeks later he visited the scene of the murder, he mistook his recollection of things told him about Perceval, the lobby of the House of Commons, &c., for the recollection of things seen in his dreams. The story actually related probably assumed form and substance after Williams's visit to London. In perfect good faith he, his wife, and his friends may have given to the story the form it finally assumed. Of course, the explanation is rendered a little easier if we suppose Mr. Williams and his wife were not unwilling to colour their story a little. If a phonograph could have received the first account of the dream as imparted to Mrs. Williams on the night of May 11, I fancy the instrument might have repeated a tale somewhat unlike that which adorns the 'Royal Book of Dreams,' and Mr. Abercrombie's treatise on the Intellectual Powers. But without any intentional untruthfulness a story of this kind is apt to undergo very noteworthy modifications.

Dr. Abercrombie himself vouches for the truth of the two following stories, that is to say, he vouches for his belief in both stories:

'A Scotch clergyman who lived near Edinburgh dreamt one night, while on a visit in that town, that he saw a fire, and one of his children in the midst of it. On awaking, he instantly got up and returned home with the greatest speed. He found his house on fire, and was just in time to assist one of his children who in the alarm had been left in a place of danger.' The second story runs as follows:—Two sisters had been for some days attending a sick brother, and one of them had borrowed a watch from a friend, her own being under repair. The sisters were sleeping together in a room communicating with that of their brother, when the elder awoke in a state of great agitation, and roused the other to tell her that she had had a frightful dream. 'I dreamt,' she said, 'that Mary's watch stopped, and that when I told you of the circumstance you replied, "Much worse than that has happened; for —'s breath has stopped also,"' naming their sick brother. The watch, however, was found to be going correctly, and the brother was sleeping quietly. The dream recurred the next night; and on the following morning, one of the sisters having occasion to seal a note, went to get the watch from a writing-desk in which she had deposited it, when she found it had stopped. She rushed into her brother's room in alarm, remembering the dream, and found that he had been suddenly seized with a fit of suffocation, and had expired. (Abercrombie, 'Intellectual Powers,' pp. 289, 302.)

With regard to the first of these stories, I would remark that we find in it what is not always to be found in stories of dream warnings, a reason and use in the dream, assuming always that the story is true and that the dream really was sent as a warning. It is possible, of course, that the story was embellished by the Scotch clergyman who related it to Abercrombie. If the story be true in all its details, it remains possible that the agreement between the dream and the event was a mere coincidence. On the first point, I shall say only that some men, and even some clergymen, have been quite capable of improving a story of this sort, with the desire perhaps of impressing on their hearer the anxious care which Providence takes in their special behalf. On the second point, it should be always remembered that among the many millions of strange dreams which might be fulfilled, some few are certain to be fulfilled, and it is of these dreams that we hear, not of those, though they are millions of times more numerous, which are not fulfilled. If, however, we accept the story precisely as related, and believe that the fulfilment of the dream was not accidental, we have at least a reasonable case of dream warning. We cannot, indeed, perceive why in this case Providence should interfere when so many similar cases happen without interference of any sort. And to the logical

mind the idea will certainly suggest itself that if special interpositions of Providence can occur in such cases, they might be expected to be greatly more numerous than they are. But considering the case apart from others, we cannot cavil at the action of Providence in this case. The danger, however, of approval in such cases will be manifest if we consider that by parity of reasoning we ought to be dissatisfied when lamentable events happen which dream warnings might have prevented.

With regard to the second of the above stories I venture to express entire want of faith. The action of the sister, who, finding the watch had stopped, rushed in alarm into her brother's room, showed that she was weak-minded and superstitious; and we cannot expect exact statements of facts from weak-minded and superstitious persons. If the story were accepted as related, the case would differ altogether from the former. We can understand that Providence might interfere to warn a father of his child's danger in time to save the child; but we cannot reasonably believe that a double dream should be specially sent to indicate that when a certain watch had stopped a certain man would be found dead. If the events happened as told the coincidence was strange, but that is all. It seems to me altogether more probable, however, that the story was inexactly related to Dr. Abercrombie.

I have said that cases in which dreams are not fulfilled are usually forgotten. Occasionally, however, such dreams are preserved on account of some peculiarity in the circumstances. The following case, related by Abercrombie, is almost as singular as if the dream warning had been fulfilled by the event. A young man who was at an academy a hundred miles from home, dreamt that he went to his father's house in the night, tried the front door, but found it locked; got in by a back-door, and, finding nobody out of bed, went directly to the bedroom of his parents. He then said to his mother, whom he found awake, 'Mother, I am going a long journey, and am come to bid you good-bye.' On this she answered, in much agitation, 'Oh, dear son, thou art dead!' He instantly awoke, and thought no more of his dream, until a few days after he received a letter from his father, inquiring very anxiously after his health, in consequence of a frightful dream his mother had had on the same night in which the dream now mentioned occurred to him. She dreamt that she heard some one attempt to open the front door, then go to the back door, and at last come into her bedroom. She then saw it was her son, who came to the side of her bed, and said, 'Mother, I am going a long journey, and I am come to bid you good-bye,' on which she exclaimed, 'Oh, dear son, thou art dead!' But nothing unusual happened to either of the parties.

This case, if correctly related by the young man, would afford some evidence in favour of the theory that mind can act on mind at a distance. But we have to trust wholly in the veracity of the unknown young man ; and it is barely possible that after reading his mother's letter he invented the account of his own dream. Or the story may have been told years after the event, and the facts related may have differed very widely from what actually happened. We know that memory often plays strange tricks in such cases.

At any rate, there was in this case no forewarning of any event, unless we suppose that the dream was sent to mother and son simultaneously, to prevent the son from undertaking a long journey at that time—assuming further that, if he had undertaken such a journey, he would have died upon the way. But anyone who could take this view of the matter would believe anything.

This unfulfilled dream, the circumstances of which, if accurately known, might probably be readily explained, reminds me of a dream or vision related by Dickens in a letter to Forster, and of the explanation which Dickens suggested in relation to it. The original narrative is so charming that I shall make no apology for quoting it without change or abridgment. 'Let me tell you,' he wrote from Genoa on September 30, 1843, 'of a curious dream I had last Monday night, and of the fragments of reality I can collect which helped to make it up. I have had a return of rheumatism in my back and knotted round my waist like a girdle of pain, and had lain awake nearly all that night under the infliction, when I fell asleep and dreamed this dream. Observe that throughout I was as real, animated, and full of passion as Macready (God bless him!) in the last scene of Macbeth. In an indistinct place, which was quite sublime in its indistinctness, I was visited by a spirit. I could not make out the face, nor do I recollect that I desired to do so. It wore a blue drapery, as the Madonna might in a picture by Raphael ; and bore no resemblance to anyone I have ever seen except in stature. I think (but I am not sure) that I recognised the voice. Any way, I knew it was poor Mary's spirit. I was not at all afraid, but in a great delight, so that I wept very much, and stretching out my arms to it called it "dear." At this I thought it recoiled ; and I felt immediately that, not being of my gross nature, I ought not to have addressed it so familiarly. "Forgive me!" I said, "we poor living creatures are only able to express ourselves by looks and words. I have used the word most natural to *our* affections ; and you know my heart." It was so full of compassion and sorrow for me—which I knew spiritually, for, as I have said, I did not perceive its emotions by its face—that it cut me to the heart ; and I said, sobbing, "Oh!

give me some token that you have really visited me !” “Form a wish,” it said. I thought, reasoning with myself, if I form a selfish wish it will vanish, so I hastily discarded such hopes and anxieties of my own as came into my mind, and said, “Mrs. Hogarth is surrounded with great distresses”.—observe, I never thought of saying “your mother,” as to a mortal creature—“will you extricate her ?” “Yes.” “And her extrication is to be a certainty to me that this has really happened ?” “Yes.” “But answer me one other question,” I said, in an agony of entreaty lest it should leave me : “What is the true religion ?” As it paused a moment without replying, I said “Good God !” in such an agony of haste, lest it should go away, “you think, as I do, that the form of religion does not so greatly matter, if we try to do good ?—or,” I said, observing that it still hesitated, and was moved with the greatest compassion for me, “perhaps the Roman Catholic is the best ? perhaps it makes one think of God oftener, and believe in Him more steadily ?” “For *you*,” said the spirit, full of such heavenly tenderness for me that I felt as if my heart would break—“for *you*, it is the best !” Then I awoke with the tears running down my face, and myself in exactly the condition of the dream. It was just dawn. I called up Kate, and repeated it three or four times over, that I might not unconsciously make it plainer or stranger afterwards. It was exactly this, free from all hurry, nonsense, or confusion whatever. Now, the strings I can gather up leading to this were three. The first you know forms the main subject of my former letter. The second was, that there is a great altar in our bedroom, at which some family who once inhabited this palace had mass performed in old time ; and I had observed within myself, before going to bed, that there was a mark in the wall above the sanctuary, where a religious picture used to be ; and I had wondered within myself what the subject might have been, *and what the face was like*. Thirdly, I had been listening to the convent bells (which ring at intervals in the night), and so had thought, no doubt, of Roman Catholic services. And yet for all this, put the case of that wish being fulfilled by any agency in which I had no hand, and I wonder whether I should regard it as a dream, or an actual vision.’

The promise of the dream-spirit was not fulfilled in this respect. If it had chanced that some agency other than Dickens’s own had, at that time, relieved Mrs. Hogarth from her anxieties, we can hardly doubt that he would have regarded the vision as real. He was, indeed, rather prone to recognise something beyond the natural in events which, to say the least, admitted of a quite natural interpretation. The story of his dream, I may remark in

passing, is interesting as showing how the thoughts of the dreamer's own mind are in a dream assigned to the visionary persons created also in reality out of the dreamer's mind. The spirit in Dickens's dream expressed precisely his own views about religion, and hesitated precisely where (as he elsewhere tells us) he himself hesitated. But where, in his own mind, he thought only that the Roman Catholic religion might be the best for him, the vision said simply that it was so. Had the dream promise been fulfilled, Dickens would probably have followed the supposed teaching of the dream-spirit. Or even if no test had been suggested to his mind in the dream, and the spirit had seemed to speak only of religion, he would probably have concluded that for him the Roman Church was the best. He would have felt, as Eliphaz the Temanite did, that this thing was secretly brought to him. It is indeed singular how closely in some respects the dream of Eliphaz the Temanite resembled that which Charles Dickens the Englishman dreamed, three or four thousand years later. 'In thoughts from the visions of the night,' says Eliphaz, 'when deep sleep falleth upon men. Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face, the hair of my flesh stood up. *It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?*' Fear possessed Eliphaz, instead of the delight which filled the heart of Dickens in the supposed presence of the departed dear one. But, like Dickens, the Temanite could hear a voice only, not discerning the form of the vision; and again, to him as to Dickens, the supposed vision repeated only what was in the dreamer's own mind.

Twenty years later Dickens had a dream which was fulfilled, at least to his own satisfaction. 'Here,' he wrote on May 30, 1863, 'is a curious case at first hand. On Thursday night last week, being at the office here,' in London, 'I dreamed that I saw a lady in a red shawl with her back towards me, whom I supposed to be E. On her turning round I found that I didn't know her, and she said, "I am Miss Napier." All the time I was dressing next morning I thought, "What a preposterous thing to have so very distinct a dream about nothing! And why Miss Napier? for I never heard of any Miss Napier." That same Friday night I read. After the reading came into my retiring-room Mary Boyle and her brother, and the lady in the red shawl, whom they present as "Miss Napier." These are all the circumstances exactly told.' This was probably a case of unconscious cerebration. Dickens had no doubt really seen the lady, and been told that she was Miss

Napier, when his attention was occupied with other matters. There would be nothing unusual in his dreaming about a person whom he had thus seen without noticing. Of course it was an odd coincidence that the lady of whom he had thus dreamed should be introduced to him soon after—possibly the very day after. But such coincidences are not infrequent. To suppose that Dickens had been specially warned in a dream about so unimportant a matter as his introduction to Miss Napier would be absurd; for, fulfilled or unfulfilled, the dream was, as Dickens himself described it, a very distinct dream about nothing.

Far different in this respect was the strange dream which President Lincoln had the night before he was shot. If the story was truly told by Mr. Stanton to Dickens, the case is one of the most curious on record. Dickens told it thus in a letter to John Forster: ‘On the afternoon of the day on which the President was shot, there was a cabinet council, at which he presided. Mr. Stanton, being at the time commander-in-chief of the Northern troops that were concentrated about here, arrived rather late. Indeed, they were waiting for him, and on his entering the room, the President broke off in something he was saying, and remarked, “Let us proceed to business, gentlemen.” Mr. Stanton then noticed with surprise that the President sat with an air of dignity in his chair, instead of lolling about in the most ungainly attitudes, as his invariable custom was; and that instead of telling irrelevant and questionable stories, he was grave, and calm, and quite a different man. Mr. Stanton, on leaving the council with the Attorney-General, said to him, “That is the most satisfactory cabinet meeting I have attended for many a long day. What an extraordinary change in Mr. Lincoln!” The Attorney-General replied, “We all saw it before you came in. While we were waiting for you, he said, with his chin down on his breast, ‘Gentlemen, something very extraordinary is going to happen, and that very soon.’” To which the Attorney-General had observed, “Something good, sir, I hope?” when the President answered very gravely, “I don’t know—I don’t know. But it will happen, and shortly, too.” As they were all impressed by his manner, the Attorney-General took him up again. “Have you received any information, sir, not yet disclosed to us?” “No,” answered the President, “but I have had a dream. And I have now had the same dream three times. Once on the night preceding the battle of Bull Run. Once on the night preceding such another” (naming a battle also not favourable to the North). His chin sank on his breast again, and he sat reflecting. “Might one ask the nature of this dream, sir?” said the Attorney-General. “Well,” replied

the President without lifting his head or changing his attitude, "I am on a great broad rolling river—and I am in a boat—and I drift!—and I drift!—but this is not business,"—suddenly raising his face, and looking round the table as Mr. Stanton entered—"let us proceed to business, gentlemen." Mr. Stanton and the Attorney-General said, as they walked on together, it would be curious to notice whether anything ensued on this, and they agreed to notice. He was shot that night.' Here the dream itself was not remarkable, it was such a one as might readily be dreamed by a man from the Western States who had been often on broad rolling rivers. Nor was its recurrence remarkable. The noteworthy point was the occurrence of this dream three several times, and (as may be presumed from the effect which the dream produced on its third recurrence) those three times only, on the night preceding a great misfortune for the cause of the North. However, there is nothing in the story which cannot be attributed to merely casual coincidence, though the coincidence was sufficiently curious. As three years had elapsed from the time of Lincoln's death when Stanton told Dickens the story, it is possible that the account may have been incorrect in some details.

It is, indeed, in this way that probably most of the more wonderful dream stories are to be explained. The tricks played by the memory in such matters would be perfectly amazing if they were not so familiar. For instance, Dr. Carpenter states that a lady had frequently asserted that she had seen a table move at the command of a medium when no one was near it. At length some one had sufficient hardihood to challenge this assertion—made, it will be understood, in perfectly good faith; and to satisfy the doubter of its truth, the lady turned to a note-book in which she had described the circumstances of the event at the time of its occurrence. There she found it stated, not as her memory had falsely told her, that no one was near the table, but that the hands of six persons were touching it!

It is possible that in the following recent and certainly most remarkable case of a fulfilled dream, the exact circumstances, had they been recorded, would have been found to be not precisely those which the narrator believed them to be.

In the 'Daily Telegraph' some months ago, in an obituary notice of General Richard Taylor, son of a former President of the United States (General Zachary Taylor), and one of the Southern generals during the Civil War, the following curious narrative was related:—

'On the morning of the day when the City and Suburban Handicap was won by Aldrich, a little-fancied outsider, it so

chanced that General Taylor travelled down to Epsom in company with Lord Vivian, and heard from him that it was his intention to back Lord Rosebery's horse, because he had dreamt that he saw the primrose and rose-hoops borne to victory in the race which they were on their road to witness. Acting upon this hint, General Taylor took 1,000 to 30 about Aldrich, and was not a little elated at the success of what he justly called "a leap in the dark." But for the accident which caused Lemnos, another much-backed candidate for the race, to fall at Tattenham Corner, there is little probability that the dream of Lord Vivian would have found the interpretation upon which General Taylor counted.'

The story probably came from one who had heard the actual circumstances as related by Lord Vivian himself at the time of their occurrence. The narrator's recollection of what he had heard, and Lord Vivian's recollection of the event itself, may both have been to some degree defective. That one or other was in fault is manifest when we compare with the above account Lord Vivian's own statement a day or two later. He wrote as follows to the editor of the 'Daily Telegraph':—

'In your "leader" on General Taylor, in this day's paper, you introduce an anecdote relative to a dream of mine. The facts are these: I did dream, on the morning of the race for the City and Suburban Handicap, that I had fallen asleep in the weighing-room of the stand at Epsom, prior to that race, and that after it had been run I was awakened by a gentleman—the owner of another in the race—who informed me that "The Teacher" had won. Of this horse, so far as my recollections serve me, I had never before heard. On reaching Victoria Station, the first person I saw was the gentleman who had appeared to me in my dream, and I mentioned it to him, observing that I could not find any horse so named in the race. He replied, "There is a horse now called Aldrich, which was previously called 'The Teacher.'" The dream so vividly impressed me that I declared my intention of backing Aldrich for 100%, and was in course of doing this, when I was questioned by his owner as to "why I backed his horse." I replied, "Because I had dreamt he had won the race." To this I was answered, "As against your dream, I will tell you this fact: I tried the horse last week with a hurdle-jumper, and he was beaten a distance" (I afterwards learnt that the trial horse was Lowlander!). I thanked my informant, and discontinued backing Aldrich. General Taylor, who had overheard what passed, asked me if I did not intend backing the horse again for myself, to win him 1,000% by him. This I did by taking for

him 1,000 to 30 about Aldrich. Such is the true account of my dream, and of General Taylor's profit from it.'

The difference between this account and that in the 'Daily Telegraph' may not seem intrinsically important; but it is noteworthy as indicating the probability that in other details there may have been changes (unintentional, of course). The 'Spectator' made the following remarks (very much to the point, I think) on this case:

'Lord Vivian's letter adds very much to the inexplicable element in the story. In the shape in which the "Daily Telegraph" originally put it, there was nothing at all in the dream but what it was quite reasonable for anyone to explain as a somewhat remarkable coincidence between a dream of the event and the event as it actually resulted, the bet offered being, however, a practical proof that the dream, as alleged, had occurred, and had greatly influenced the mind of the dreamer and one of his companions before the prediction was fulfilled. But Lord Vivian's testimony that, instead of dreaming of Aldrich as the winner, the friend seen in his dream had mentioned a horse whose name was utterly unknown to him—at least, unknown to him in his waking state—and of whose running he had no knowledge, and that the name so dreamed of proved to have been the name of a former horse actually in the race, supplies a very excellent reason why he should have been sufficiently struck by his dream to intend acting upon it, until he was discouraged by hearing of the horse's defeat by a hurdle-jumper, and why General Richard Taylor insisted that if Lord Vivian did not bet on Aldrich on his own account, he should still bet on him on behalf of General Richard Taylor. In truth, Lord Vivian has supplied the only really striking feature in the story. Everybody would be disposed to explain it at once as a case of coincidence, but for the bit of fresh knowledge apparently supplied in the dream, and verified in fact before the chief prediction of the dream had been tested. Now, here we have exceedingly good evidence, not only of a successful prediction of an unlikely event—for that is nothing, and occurs every day—but of its prediction after a fashion which appears to have been beyond the scope of the dreamer's power. That he should have dreamt of the winning of the race by a horse of name quite unknown to him would of course have been nothing. But that after such a dream a friend should have been able to point out a horse actually running in the race to which the unknown name had actually belonged, was clearly a practical verification of the informing character of the dream, and makes the coincidence—

if coincidence it were—of the complete fulfilment of all the important predictions of the dream, one far more extraordinary than the fulfilment of any simple anticipation. Is there any explanation possible of the really curious part of the story, the discernment that a horse which had been called “The Teacher” was to run in the race, although Lord Vivian could not recall ever having heard of such a horse, without recourse to hypothesis of an unverified and as yet purely conjectural kind ?

The writer of the article in the ‘Spectator’ proceeds to offer such an explanation :—‘Supposing Lord Vivian to have really had something to do with the horse called “The Teacher,” and to have been told in a moment of almost complete inattention that it had been rechristened “Aldrich,” it is barely possible—we do not say it is at all likely—that this association may have revived in sleep, without presenting any of the appearance of a memory. In his waking hours, his mind may have dwelt on Lord Rosebery as a coming power on the Turf, and that may have turned his attention to the name of Lord Rosebery’s horse. This name may, in sleep, have revived the half-obiterated association of old days, and the name of “The Teacher” may have come back. And then the imposing character of this name may have suggested a dream in which the dreamer was solemnly told that “The Teacher” had won the race. Such, we say, is a possible, though not at all probable, explanation of this strange dream, supposing it related with perfect accuracy. Certain it is, that our memories are often so much transformed in our sleeping state, that they hardly comport themselves as memories at all, but rather as brand-new experiences, when they are really due to the laws of association, though of association so completely stripped of all its most familiar elements as to look stranger than a totally new impression.’

Of course this explanation, even if accepted, gives no account of the fulfilment of the dream despite the heavy antecedent probability against Aldrich winning. Unless we set this down to mere coincidence, we should either have to believe that Lord Vivian was specially favoured with a vision by which—if only he were clever enough to avail himself of the information—he might win much money on a horse-race (a somewhat questionable proceeding if he were assured that the information were trustworthy, and a somewhat foolish proceeding if he were not), or else we must suppose that in his sleep information which he had once had (but had forgotten) about the horse’s qualities showed him what in his waking hours he could not have ascertained, that the horse really had a better chance than bettors imagined. Possibly persons who bet on horse-races give their minds (or what they regard as such) so

entirely to that absorbing though not very ennobling pursuit, that they often dream about horses winning races. As their name is legion, and their dreams would therefore be multitudinous, the wonder rather is, perhaps, that we do not oftener hear of seemingly remarkable fulfilments of such dreams, than that one or two cases of the kind should be recorded. Certainly there is little in this case to encourage special faith in dreams about racing. However ready the believer in dreams may be to regard dream warnings as supernatural, he can hardly regard information about horse-races as communicated from above. If they came from the contrary direction, it would be unsafe to accept them with blind confidence, remembering to whom the parentage of falsehood has been, on excellent authority, attributed.

RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

Our Old Country Towns.

XI.—BOSTON.

To a visitor from the shores of Europe the names of American towns are not a little surprising. All the lands of Homer, and nearly all the cities of Scripture, seem to be pressed into the service of the guide-books and time-tables, and sometimes the traveller may almost doubt, when the name of the station is called out, whether he be not waking from a reverie and travelling in the old country. Nearly all this chapter will be occupied by Boston and its associations, and many readers may be surprised to see how much our own Boston is associated with the city of the States, nor will anyone be surprised at the erratic wanderings of a letter which was posted from Chester to a friend in Boston, and wandered free of expense twice across the Atlantic Ocean because 'Linc.' was not inscribed on the envelope. Boston is easily approached through Stamford—the town which was seen by Nicholas Nickleby on the cold winter night when he made a dreary journey with the amiable Mr. Squeers. The churches that rose 'dark and frowning' above the snow were St. Michael's, St. Mary's, St. George's, All Saints', and St. John's. There are many remains of fourteenth century architecture in Stamford, and traces of the Grey Friars, the Black Friars, and the Austin Friars. There is a curious account of an old custom in Stamford given by so careful an antiquary as Britton, and it was in existence in 1807, when he wrote. It is called Bull-running, and tradition says that William Earl of Warren in the reign of King John, standing on his castle wall, saw two bulls fighting, as indeed bulls will often fight, and a butcher who owned one set his dogs upon the animal belonging to him to get it away, but they chased it to Stamford, and were joined by a number of other dogs, who followed it with so much vigour that a large multitude assembled in the streets, and were charged upon by the bull, and some of them fared badly. The episode was so congenial to the tastes of the nobleman who had witnessed it from the beginning, that he gave the meadows where the entertainment commenced to the butchers of Stamford after the first crop was taken off on condition of their supplying a bull annually six weeks before Christmas to run the gauntlet hotly pursued by townsmen; but when Britton wrote in 1807, the proceedings had so far fallen in interest and vigour that no extra duty was

entailed on the coroner. This is the land of the early settlers in New England. They left not from want, or because they were tired of their country. It was the incorrigible persecutions of the Stuarts that drove men who were as truly and loyally English as any that ever heard the lark carol into a distant and then a desert land, to become in the fulness of time the founders of the United States.

The traditions of Boston are intimately connected with America, and the inhabitants will always listen with delight to the tales of those who have been there, and can describe what perhaps they would obtain easy absolution for having called their 'daughter.' They have always a list of visitors from America who may have come to see the original town, and who rarely search in vain for the reminiscences or the tombs of their forefathers. These are found not only in the grand old church of St. Botolph, but in the neighbouring parishes of Leverton, Bennington, Butterwick, Freiston, or Skirbeck: and it is curious to remark how Boston names have crossed the ocean to New Boston. There are, for example, in Liverpool not more than six Everetts, out of nearly half a million of inhabitants, and not a single address appears in the Liverpool directory of Cushing or Frothingham; yet these names, familiar in America, are common in Lincolnshire, so that it is no manufactured ancestry.

Quis genus Æneadum, quis Trojæ nesciat urbem.

And when John Cotton, after ministering some twenty years in blameless life at the church of St. Botolph, fled in disguise from the persecutions of Laud, he spoke of joining those of his fellow-countrymen whom he well knew, that had gone before him, and those that would follow after. A far more slender thread has sufficed to make a family tree out of recent additions to English aristocracy than Boston men might find in Lancashire.

If we take also a railway guide and look at the stations round Boston (America), we find the same recollections of their old homes preserved. We have Lynn, Beverley, Ipswich, Woburn, and Billerica, with many others that show that the pilgrim fathers and all their co-patriots, in crossing the ocean, changed their skies but not their affections.

Old Boston is a delightful town, and it would well repay a visit even as a pleasant trip to an American, especially as he may take in Lincoln with its gigantic cathedral on the way. It is only a few hours' distance from Liverpool, and there are many choices of routes; but the Manchester, Lincoln, and Sheffield railway has probably the greatest attraction for an American tourist.

There is a singular resemblance in Boston to some of the best cities in Holland, and the tower of the church is said to have been copied from Antwerp. However this may be, anyone who walks up the wharves and banks of the Wytham will not fail to recognise the resemblance to a city in the Low Countries. The narrow river is lined on each side with tall old-fashioned warehouses, and these find their way into unexpected parts of the town. There are red-tiled roofs similar to those we find in Rotterdam and Antwerp, and some of these have introduced those gable-lights that help to make even warehouses picturesque. Not a few have their gables to the streets, and the low stories and small windows that crowd over each other do in reality indicate a more economic style of architecture than the sumptuous warehouses of modern days; for I have often noticed in Montreal, a city that combines the old and modern America, that the warehouses which the French Canadians of the last century built are far more fitted for the requirements of the country than the gorgeous warehouses that are now taking their places. They are more easily warmed, and the lifts from one floor to another are so much easier. All along the Wytham are antique wooden wharves, where old-fashioned Dutch-looking vessels are moored, and some of these vessels are of great antiquity; hardly perhaps equalling the 'Mayflower;' but certainly one that had traded for coals and came to we could hardly say an untimely end, was discovered by an astonished Court of Inquiry to have been built in the reign of William and Mary. Some English papers, in commenting last year upon the circumstance, said that there was not a single plank of the old vessel left, but that all had been renewed. It is perhaps more probable that many of the old planks and timbers were remaining, and the repairs occupied a comparatively small surface.

There is a peculiar feature also in Boston that reminds one of the thrifty days of our ancestors. Attached to the warehouses are some goodly dwellings where the old merchants used to live, and we can see through breaks in the streets great walls that surround broad gardens. There is one curious black-painted wooden warehouse that must have been there for many generations. It is built of oak, and stands across the roadway on oak columns, having a walk under. Here and there, a flight of well-worn steps conducts any traveller who may require it to the water's edge, where boatmen and fishermen do congregate, and are willing to do his bidding. The markets at Boston are held on Wednesdays, and on a much smaller scale on Saturdays, and these greatly resemble some of the fairs where wool and staples were sold, when Boston was one of the few staple towns in England. A staple town, it is hardly necessary

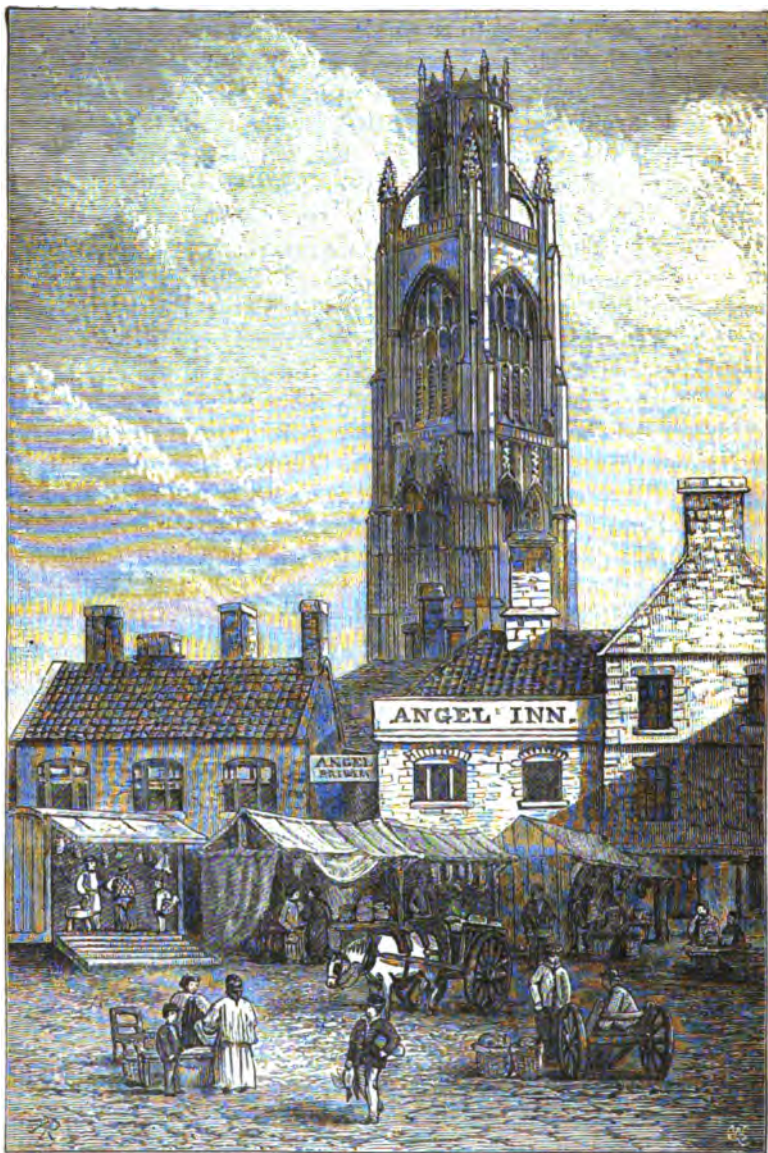


Boston Harbour, on the Wytham (Linc.).

to add, was a town chartered to carry on a business in what is called a staple article, such as wool, or lead, or tin, and it was also a place for the receipt of the king's customs; perhaps in the latter respect it might be said to resemble one of our own ports of entry, though it both exacted and was subject to greater obligations; and if we observe the various contrivances in the market-place, it is not possible to avoid the conclusion that Boston market derives some of its peculiar character from the old times of the fairs. Curious vans are pushed out into the ample market square, and canvas awnings are erected early in the morning. Anyone passing through the square on Tuesday would notice only a large irregular space, overshadowed by the vast tower of St. Botolph's church, and surrounded by substantial old-fashioned buildings; but at an early hour on Wednesday this large space is covered over with a fungous growth, and presents no appearance of the quiet of the day before. Railways and country waggons supply a goodly assortment of merchandise, and the vans that are run out from yards and converted into shops are soon filled with goods. One particular class of van is shown in the market square here: it is on low wheels, and is drawn out by a horse from some yard on market days. Its construction may be said to resemble a large trunk with a double lid, and this lid is turned to the street. When in commission the lower half of the lid is dropped down so as to form a gangway, and the upper part is supported so as to make a kind of awning. But the goods which are offered are very various, and in a short tour round the market square I noticed laid out for sale every kind of agricultural machinery—ploughs, harrowing machines, and all the latest inventions in scythes and rakes. One enterprising Boston man had brought a small steam-engine, which he erected in a long tent, and soon had in working order. I passed later in the day to discover what his particular line of business was, and saw a great heap of axes, hedge-clippers, and knives, and even spades and shares that had been brought (in some instances from a long distance) to be ground. There were tailors' shops, dyers, American sewing-machines, corn merchants, sentry-boxes, one or two auctioneers', probably to be on hand to dispose of unsold stock at the close of the day, and of course every possible kind of farming, or dairy, or garden produce. Next day we may search for the assembly in vain. The insubstantial pageant has faded and the square is swept and empty.

Camden thus speaks of Boston: 'It is a considerable town, standing on both sides of the Wytham, over which is a lofty wooden bridge. Its commodious harbour occasions it to be much frequented, and it has a large market-place, and a church remarkable for its

beauty and size, whose tower, running up to a great height, as it were hails travellers at a great distance.'



Wednesday Morning in Market Square, Boston, Lincolnshire.

This is but too true, or at least the residents there in Edward I.'s time had too good cause to say so. The tower of St. John's, its

predecessor, hailed too many travellers to its shadow, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say the fair did. For a number of knights announced that there was to be a tournament at Boston, and so drew an exceptional amount of *éclat* to the coming fair; and when the fair of staples was at its height, the chivalrous knights entered the town disguised as monks, and when fairly in, they detached themselves over the place, and set fire to various parts of it. In the hurry that ensued, they set fire to the merchants' tents and plundered their goods. It is said by some of the historians that the treasures in the tents were very great, and as the fair was advanced, much gold and silver had accumulated, which ran down in streams in Boston market square; nor is this quite improbable: a very few moidores would make a great show when set loose in such a way. The leader of this remarkable exploit, named Chamberlin, was subsequently captured and executed; but he always, to the last, refused to give the name of his accomplices. 'Better times succeeding raised Botolph's town once more out of its ashes, and the staple for wool, &c. brought in great wealth, and invited the merchants of the Hanseatic League, who established here their guild or house. It is at present handsomely built and drives a considerable trade.' Leland also, who lived in the reign of Henry VIII., thus speaks of the calamity that overtook Boston: 'Mr. Paynel, a gentleman of Boston, tolde me, that syns that Boston of old tyme at the great famosé fair there kept was burnt, that scant syns it ever came to the old glory and riches that it had; yet sins hath it beene manyfold richer than it is now. The staple and the stiliard houses yet there remaine; but the stiliard is little or nothing occupied. There were iiii colleges of freres, merchants of the stiliard cumming by all partes by est were wont greatly to haunt Boston, and the Grey freres tooke them in a manor for founders of their house, and many Esterlinges were buried there. In the blake freres lay one of the noble Huntingfeldes, and was a late taken up hole, and a leaden bull of Innocentius, Bishop of Rochester, about his neck.' He further says that: 'Ther remaineth at Boston a manor place of the Tilneys by their name, and one of them began the great steeple in Bostor, and lies in the church by the steeple.' The men of Boston of the soke belonging to the honour of Richemunt in Holland paid 100*l.* and two palfreys that no sberiff or his bailiffs shoud interfere or have anything to do with them, but they should choose a bailiff of their own from among themselves, who was to answer at the Exchequer for pleas and outgoings, as they used to answer the Earl of Bretagne while it was in his hands. They received a charter

from the king; and the seal of the guild represented Bishop Blaise with a woolpack and crosier.

Leland speaks of the 'faire market-place, and a crosse with a square tower,' and says that at one time the church of the parish was at St. John's, and St. Botolph's was but a chapel to it. 'Now,' however, in his time, 'the church of St. Botolph's has become the principal one,' and is indeed the 'fairest of all in Lincolnshire,' 'and served so with singing, and that of cunning men, as no parish is in all England.' Richard Gough, the antiquary, who visited Boston in 1783, says that even then there was no trace of St. John's church, and the font of St. Botolph's was a new one that dated back only to 1667. He also says that the singing was 'not extraordinary' at the time he was there.

We must always remember the uphill times the Boston men had in the fights with the sea in earlier days, almost resembling that of their opposite neighbours in Holland. It is often remarked that a luxurious soil is apt to beget a negligent race of cultivators, and indeed, if we look round Europe, we must admit that there is much reason in this, even though happily the rule is not universal; but the Lincoln soil had to be reclaimed, and the tillers became all the fonder of it. In the year 1178 the old sea-bank at the mouth of the Wytham broke and flooded the fen country; but the sturdy inhabitants were equal to the occasion, and so soon repaired the damage that William of Malmesbury, writing twenty-three years after, says that the 'country was a very paradise, and a heaven for the delight thereof.' And even if we may suspect that a little surplusage could be taken off this description, from the genial weather, and the happy frame of mind William happened to be in at the time he made his report, there is yet left abundant evidence of the energy with which the men of Boston and its neighbourhood set themselves to repair the damages. Now the many generations of toil have produced a magnificent country and a fine race of men—men who are descended from those that stood so boldly forward in asserting the liberties of England. It is impossible to go into Boston market on a Wednesday morning without being struck by the size and 'heft,' as the word goes there, of the countrymen.

They cannot always, it is sad to admit, be acquitted of sharp trading; for the year after William of Malmesbury was round the Boston fens, a complaint reached the king that the cloth the manufacturers were turning out was not so wide as it should be according to statute—that was, two ells between the lists. 'But instead of taking them in the king's name,' Camden says, 'the merchants persuaded the justiciaries to leave them for a sum of

money, to the damage of many.' The importance of Boston as a commercial centre may be gathered from the fact that when King John (who, like the line of Stuarts, perished in a 'desperate struggle against English freedom') ordered a tax on merchants, London yielded 836*l.*, Boston 780*l.*, and Southampton 712*l.*; so that Boston was in reality the second town in England in commercial importance. In the year 1206, Ralph Gernum and Robert Clark of London were sent to the various ports of Lincolnshire with orders to collect every vessel capable of holding eight or more horses, which were to be sent to Portsmouth, and at the same time a very wholesale order was given for 'all merchants, helmsmen, and sailors to repair to the king at Portsmouth;' and some idea of the energy of John, who has commonly been regarded as listless, may be gathered from the terms of his summons: 'Anyone disregarding these commands, whatever be his country, we will always hold our enemy, wherever we find him in our dominions, whether on land or water.'

It would seem from the annals of Boston that the

good old rule

That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who-can,

was well understood in the year 1276, when an inquisition was held by twenty-four jurors of wapentake, and they found that 'Robert de Tattershall claims to have at St. Botolph's on the west side of the river a tonnage of lead and wool, and a court from seventh day to seventh day—they know not by what tenure.' But the king's claims seem to have been of a much more comprehensive nature, and some of them, one would think, nobody would have cared much to have deprived him of. He not only claimed the 'assize of Beer and Bread,' but also 'the right of gallows, pillory, ducking-stool, and all waifs and strays of the sea from salting to wrangle, by what warrant they know not.'

The name 'St. Botolph's town' that continually occurs was the origin of Boston. St. Botolph was a Saxon saint who lived in the seventh century, and was almost contemporaneous with the more celebrated St. Cuthbert. The common pronunciation in the eastern counties is St. Bottle, so the transition from Bottletown to Boston is very comprehensible. He appears to have been a favourite saint along that coast, and the priory at Colchester, of which the west front and some of the walls remain, is very interesting. It seems to have been built in part with the Roman bricks that were used at the great military station there.

Boston furnished during the reign of Edward III. a great part

of the navy that conveyed his army to the battle of Cressy, a battle that taught the world that a man-at-arms was equal to a knight of the most ancient lineage, and marked the period when feudalism began to totter to its fall. And almost at the same period the great church began to raise its stately head. Its history is quite characteristic of the Lincoln men. It was not erected by any wealthy prelate or lord of the soil, but was the free work of the inhabitants of Boston. Margaret Tylney gave five pounds towards the building, and two others gave similar sums, which were the largest amounts contributed; all the rest was made up of small sums. The tower is generally called 'Boston stump,' though why so graceful and tall a structure should be called so is not at first clear; but the stem of a pollard tree would make the proportions of a high tower, and as a vessel approaches through Boston Deep it has in a mist or in twilight very much the appearance of a stem, called a stump there, rising high above the flat lands. It was intended, indeed, as a landmark for mariners, and in its graceful lantern a beacon-fire used to be lit at night. It is not the only church tower that was used for a beacon-light; at Hadley the iron cradle that held the fire is still standing at its post. Boston tower is said, on the authority of a folio engraving published by Dr. Stukely in 1715, to have been begun in the year 1309, but no authority is given for this date. Some parts of the church may be nearly of that age, but the architecture of the tower is fully a century later. Of course it is supposable, when we consider how the money was raised for the church, that it may have been many years in building.

The height is given in guide-books as 300 feet; this must be taken from the water's edge, for from the churchyard to the pinnacles it is 276 feet, which is, however, prodigiously high. It is a wonderful piece of architecture as to its mechanical construction, and four circular staircases, one in each turret, lead to the lantern, from which a view of a vast landscape stretches out to the west, while the German Ocean spreads out to the east. In early times this church had the right of sanctuary, and malefactors who could reach it were for the time safe from the process of the law. Curious theories of law prevailed in those times. A Mr. Francis with his horse was drowned in St. Botolph's river near the church, and a fine of 11*d.* was levied on the horse's skin: a grim judgment that was arrived at in consequence of that being regarded in court as the most valuable asset left. The river at Boston was at one time comparatively swift, though perhaps Leland's 'runs like an arrow' is hardly accurate; at any rate, boat accidents were not uncommon, and in such cases a fine was levied on the boat.

Two females who fell into tubs of hot verjuice were scalded to death, and in this case the tubs were fined; and in cases of wounds from weapons, the weapons were fined. These fines, of course, went to the crown. Walls at one time surrounded Boston, and some traces of them are yet left: these were kept in repair by tolls on goods, and a curious record is preserved of them. A 'weight,' for some unexplained cause, was the Boston method of expressing 256 pounds; perhaps it was given by the porters who had to convey packages of this measure across a wharf, or street; at any rate, all 'weights' of cheese, fat, tallow, butter, or lead for sale paid $\frac{1}{4}d.$; a hundred-weight was of course 112 pounds, and one of almonds, or rice, or wax, paid $\frac{1}{2}d.$; but this amount of pepper, ginger, white cinnamon, incense, quicksilver, vermilion, cinnamon, and what would now be termed heavy groceries, paid $\frac{1}{4}d.$; and so the lists run on, including everything that can have been in general use, even to fox-skins and stock-fish. It may be interesting to remark here that the many curious weights and measures that had prevailed in England saw their end on January 1, 1879, and since that the wonderful tables, that have puzzled not only Americans but Englishmen, have been merging into the imperial standard. Soon this was done in America, when the colonists went over; but it is a little singular that, though these measures have passed away, many of the old words obsolete in England have found a home in America, and can only be discovered here in provincial vocabularies. One of these I happened to meet with in a fine old hostelry at Boston, and asked a friend who had spent some years in America if he ever heard the expression 'game leg' as applied to a damaged limb, or of anyone who had changed his residence as 'flitting,' or a turkey-cock called a 'gobbler,' or anyone being required to 'foot' a bill; all of which he said he had often heard, but never out of America, and I astonished him by pointing out every word in a book of old Lincolnshire dialect; but the list might have been extended indefinitely; and even what is often regarded as a pure American expression, 'I guess,' is really very old English. Chaucer says:—

Her yellow hair was braided in a tress,
Behind her back, a yard long, I guess;

and Locke says, 'He whose design it is to excel in English poetry would not, I guess, think that the way of it was to make his first essay in Latin verse.' Locke may, it is possible, have introduced it into Carolina. But it probably is only a variation of the old English word 'wis,' to know anything, and that is almost the exact sense in which it is commonly used in the States. Many an 'Americanism' has been used in Boston grammar-school, before

the great exodus to Massachusetts. The drawing of Boston School here given is taken just as the precincts are entered from the road. There is a large imposing master's house probably not more than a century old, and at its side is a very noble wrought-iron gateway of greater age; a liberal playground leads up to the school, which was built in the year 1567, and endowed. The master's fees have been varied from time to time, both in the amount and in the manner of collection, and now they are fixed at 200*l.* with a residence. Under him was an usher, who is now styled the second master, and who is paid by rents rising from property. This building consists of a centre rather nicely broken by a bow window, and two wings. From the style one might have con-



Ancient Grammar School, Boston, Lincolnshire, founded A.D. 1567.

sidered it to be later, but from James I. to Charles II. there is in such buildings a great general similarity. At the back of the school, enveloped in trees, is a fine old brick tower, once attached to a mansion-house that has disappeared. This is built of brick like Tattershall Castle, which was at one time the residence of the family who seem to have levied tolls on Boston, though the wapentake jury, as we have seen, sadly declared that they did not know by what warrant. To make a slight digression here, it may be remarked that these tolls have in some instances survived up to the present time; as for example, a very wealthy English nobleman now living erects a barricade at the entrance to an old market and

levies 2*d.* on every four-footed animal that comes there to be sold; if the custom has been abolished, it is only very recently, for I heard complaints of it the last time I was at the town in question.

The brick tower just referred to is called Hussey Tower, and it stands to the north of St. John's churchyard, which has before been mentioned; an ancient wall that runs along the roadway encloses it. The estate of Lord Hussey was granted to the corporation of Boston, and they sold and took away much of a venerable old mansion called Hussey Hall, but a great pile of gabled buildings was removed in 1780, and various articles both before and since were carted away. An old engraving still remains that shows it to have been a very noble residence, and its removal was little less than a national loss. It might have been so readily converted, had it remained, into some fine institution, or even public offices—like Aston Hall near Birmingham, or Bank Hall near Warrington—but unhappily the powers decreed otherwise, and the materials were taken away and sold. One thing is clear, that it must have required some time and labour to demolish it. The brickwork all round Boston is excellent; the old builders seem to have taken their models generally from the Low Countries on the other side of the German Ocean, though, singularly enough, they used the style of setting which is called English very generally, in preference to 'Dutch bond:' and this is believed to be so much better constructively, that it is in the present day commonly employed. The walls of Tattershall Castle and other old buildings in Lincolnshire are so perfectly even, that any builder would stand high in his craft who was able to put up such work.

The grammar-school itself that has caused this digression has the following inscription over the door: '*Reginæ Elisabethæ nono. Maior et Burgenses Bostoniæ uno et eodem consensu puerorum institutionis gratiâ in piis litteris hanc ædificerunt scholam Gulielmo Ganocke stapulæ mercatore et tunc maiore existenti.*' At one time the fairs alluded to in another place were held in the school enclosure, and even so lately as the last century it was called the mart yard. It was enacted, however, that no soldiers should drill in the mart yard, for fear of distracting the attention of the scholars unduly. But the present market square has for generations been also a mart. Old Boston school has been the original 'alma mater' where many a resident of New Boston might trace the names of his forefathers. Boston records are, as a general rule, freely open, and especially to what Old Boston calls its offspring; and it is not very uncommon for farmers who come to market to speak of their namesakes across the deep, and dilate

on the prosperity of their tenth cousins ; for it must be remembered that many of the early settlers in Massachusetts before Cotton's time were men either from Boston or the neighbourhood ; and it has been remarked that they differed in most particulars from the earlier settlers in Maryland or Virginia ; these had often either run through a patrimony, or were younger brothers of noble families with no prospects at home, that contrived to get a large grant of land where tobacco and cotton might be grown. The Massachusetts settlers were men of the middle and upper classes in England, and as such may be said to have differed even from the artisans who ventured across the Atlantic in the 'Mayflower.' They wished only for substantial men in their number ; they were not driven from their fatherland by earthly want or adventure, or in hopes of finding the gold mines that Cabot had falsely said abounded in the New World. They were men who could not conform to the practices of English sacerdotalism, and tore themselves away with many a pang from their fatherland. 'Our hearts,' Winthrop's followers wrote to some of the brethren they left behind, 'shall be fountains of tears for your everlasting welfare, when we shall be in our poor cottages in the wilderness.' John Cotton,¹ the vicar of Boston, who resigned his benefice to join the new settlers, was a man of scholarship and high standing, and only left his vicarage because he would not conform to the genuflections and bowings that were ordained to be used in the Church of England ; his life was, it is true, without reproach, but he could not conform to what he believed to be superstition, and he appealed in vain to the Bishop of Lincoln and the Earl of Dorset to save him from the impending persecution, urging that for twenty years his sole aim had been to advance righteousness and godliness, and saying, with perfect truth, that his way of life was before all men, and none could challenge it. He indeed might have gone far beyond the patriarch in asking whose ox or whose ass he had taken, for he gave to the extent of his power, and left himself often very bare. All this Lord Dorset knew quite well, and his reply showed that at any rate he was not a hypocrite, for he told him that 'if his crime had been merely drunkenness, or uncleanness, or any such lesser fault,' there would have been no difficulty at all in procuring his pardon, but as for Puritanism or nonconformity, these were too heinous, and he had better fly. But the Stuarts had run thirty years their astonishing career before Cotton left Boston for America,

¹ In an interesting article in the London 'Standard,' which mentions Boston celebrating its 260th anniversary, it is stated that Cotton was not the first minister who came to New Boston, but a somewhat crusty old divine, the Rev. Mr. Blaxton, had preceded him. He was, however, bought out by Winthrop, and settled in parts unknown with some few of his followers.

and Eliot and Cromwell all in vain had stood between them and their doom. Distance has hardly softened down those dreary days, though we can turn always with delight to the heroic souls that might hardly have been heard of in prosperity, but, like Boston beacon, shone all the brighter on the darkest night.

The Puritans, it is unnecessary to say, only wished to worship in their own way, or else, if that were forbidden, to leave England for freer skies. But the genius of Laud stopped the latter resource, and filled the English gaols with those who were only there for conscience' sake. Still, to prevent vast numbers leaving the shores for America was beyond even his power, and indeed the dissolution of the Parliament in 1629 was accompanied by some of the most dramatic scenes in English history. The king had decided to rule without a parliament, and the doctrine of passive obedience was preached from almost all episcopal pulpits. Eliot, who was a great landed proprietor, was far from being a fanatic, but he caught the spirit of the times, and wrote from his country mansion, 'Nothing but Heaven shrouds us from despair;' and when he went up to the House of Commons afterwards—the last that sat before it was dissolved for eleven years—he broke out in impassioned eloquence: 'The Gospel is that truth in which this kingdom hath been happy through a long prosperity. This ground therefore let us lay for a foundation of our building, that that truth, not with words but with actions, we will maintain. There is a ceremony used in the Eastern churches, of standing at the repetition of the creed, to testify their purpose to maintain it, not only with their bodies upright but their swords drawn. Give me leave to call that custom very commendable.' But now all was in confusion: Charles was in the Lords Chamber, and had summoned the Commons into his presence. The framers of the taxes who had appeared to answer their illegal levies before the Commons, pleaded the king's commands for silence, and the Speaker intimated that he had a royal order to adjourn. Through all this confusion, however, Eliot was still on the floor of the House. The doors were locked against the king's messengers; the Speaker, with a sturdy sense of legality, was held down in the chair; and Charles could have heard his own knell in the ringing cheers that greeted Eliot's closing words, 'none have ever gone about to break parliaments but in the end parliaments have broken them.' It would be about five years after this memorable scene that John Cotton decided to give up his vicarage at Boston, and fly to New England. Cotton belonged to an old and honourable English family. One branch has for many generations been settled at Combermere Abbey in Cheshire, a venerable mansion in a very

beautiful park, that once belonged to the Cistercian monks, and skirts one of the meres or small lakes which are a feature in Cheshire. This branch of the family is now represented by Lord Combermere. To another branch belonged Charles Cotton, whose name will always be held dear as the associate of good old Isaac Walton. Walton, by the way, curiously appears as an admirer of Sheldon the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in his palace at Lambeth listened with amusement to the mock sermon of a cavalier, who had returned from Boston and Essex, and held up the nasal twang and Puritan idioms to derision; yet Sheldon was by no means the worst of his day, or good old Isaac Walton would



Cotton Memorial, restored at the cost of residents in the United States.

not have spoken so kindly of him as he did, even though it must be admitted that he warmed over him as a fisher, not of men, but of 'the barbel or umber.' Cotton was born at the town of Derby on December 4, 1585. His father was Rowland Cotton, a lawyer, and it was at first intended that he should follow the profession of his father, in order to enable him to recover some estates that had left the family, as was supposed, unjustly; but fortunately his lot was otherwise cast, and he went, after having passed a creditable career at Derby school, to Trinity College, Cambridge, where at the age of twenty-one he became a Master of Arts. He married Elizabeth Horrocks, the sister of James Horrocks, a celebrated

minister of Lancashire: and the family of Horrocks is as well known by Australian and American 'dry-goods' merchants of the present day as is Witney in Oxfordshire, a town that at one time excelled all others in the manufacture of blankets, and can boast of a noble church with one of the richest livings in England. Of this church, as it happens, a grandson of Cotton's born in America became rector, having accompanied his father to England in the year 1688. In his day Witney was in its glory, and twenty shuttles were busy where now we only have one. Among Cotton's descendants are the families of Cushing, Everett, Frothingham, Grant, Hale, Jackson, Lee, Mather, Storer, Thayer, Tofts, Tracy, Upham, Walter, Whiting, and many other well-known names. The chapel shown on the previous page lies on the south-west angle of St. Botolph's church, and was restored to Cotton's memory by the residents of the United States, at a cost of 700*l.* sterling. An inscription in Latin by the Hon. Edward Everett of Boston, Massachusetts, records the circumstance.

In perpetuam Johannis Cottoni memoriam
 Hujus ecclesiæ multos per annos
 Regulantibus Jacobo et Carolo, Vicarii
 Gravis, disertis, doctis, laboriosis.
 Dein propter res sacras in patria misere turbatas
 Novis sedibus in novo orbe quaesitis.
 Ecclesiæ primariæ, Bostoniæ, Nov-Anglorum
 Nomen hoc venerabile.
 In Cottoni honorem deducentis
 Usque ad finem vitæ summâ laude
 Summâque in rebus tam humanis quam divinis auctoritate
 Pastoris et Doctoris,
 Annis CCXXV, post migrationem ejus peractis
 Prognati ejus civesque Bostonienses Americani
 A fratribus Anglicis ad hoc pium munus provocati
 Ne viri eximii nomen
 Utriusque orbis desiderii et decoris
 Diutius a templo nobili exularet
 In quo per tot annos oracula divina
 Diligenter docte sancteque enuntiavisset
 Hoc sacellum restaurandum, et hanc tabulam ponendam
 Anno salutis recuperatæ
 Libenter grate curaverunt.

Cotton was not the only English clergyman who left at that time to found a new church. Hooker went from Hartford to found the church of Hartford, giving the name to the city, as Cotton's friends had done for Boston. For many years Cotton continued his labours in his new country, and could he only now see the result of his pilgrimage, he might say, 'With my staff I crossed over this Jordan, and now I am become two hands.'

But darker times were still before the Puritans, and however disastrous these might be to England's welfare, they were of great benefit to the Western Hemisphere. It is true that Cromwell appeared on the scene, and during his short reign peace and justice were restored; but his mighty soul had hardly passed away, before the third of the Stuarts appeared on the scene, and sauntered into the palaces of his ancestors as if he had only returned from the 'grand tour,' and as if the solemn protest of Cromwell's whole reign and the terrible tragedy of Whitehall had no concern for him. He devoted the whole of his not inconsiderable abilities to cultivate all that was frivolous and nearly all that was vicious in life, and to mock, and teach others to mock, at whatever was earnest: but the ill-starred house was permitted to descend to even a lower depth still before the long suffering of England was filled up to the measure, and the Stuarts banished. James II. came to the throne, and from the first outstripped even his brother in wickedness. Perhaps, indeed, he was the worst monarch that ever sat on an English throne. Those who would have gone over the ocean quietly to New England were imprisoned, and except in the actual bloodshed, England resembled Spain at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. Bunyan was imprisoned in Bedford Gaol in Charles II.'s time, with many other good men who had not succeeded in crossing the ocean, and his mental sufferings were touchingly told. The parting from his wife, he says in his own pathetic language, was 'like the pulling off the flesh from the bones, and that not because I am somewhat too fond of those great mercies, but also because I should often have it brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants my poor family was like to meet with should I be taken from them.' He is especially anxious about his 'poor blind child.' He says, knowing too well the hard times that Puritans were having: 'Poor child, what sorrow art thou to have for thy portion in this world! thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer cold, hunger, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow upon thee.' Whether the strictly Saxon spirit of independence—the spirit that enabled the inhabitants to hold out so long against the Normans—lingered longest in the lands round the fens, it may not be easy to say; but this part of England was the stronghold of the Puritans,—and there is hardly a town that has not several namesakes in New England.

ALFRED RIMMER.

(To be concluded.)

An Expensive Derby.

WHEN one gets beyond middle age, a reflection occurs to one occasionally—whether one is naturally inclined to think of such matters or not—of which our youth has no experience. ‘How many of our friends, alas, have “joined the majority!”’ When we are young, and a contemporary is immaturely carried off, the incident, it is true, may strike us more forcibly than when the same thing happens in later years, but it strikes us as exceptional and without any relation to our own tenure of life. Tom and Jack die of a fever, or have their necks broken in a steeple-chase, or are shot in the wars, and as we ourselves are careful about contagion, and don’t hunt, and have never dreamed of joining the Army, the melancholy event is placed under the head of ‘Casualties,’ and, as far as its moral is concerned, is soon forgotten. But when we have arrived at a time of life when about half our old friends are in this world and half in the other, their losses begin to have a more personal application. The great Dr. Johnson used to advise folks of mature years to make friends with young people, so that in their old age they should not be left desolate. But, in the first place, it is not easy for men to make new friends of their juniors (who naturally prefer companions of their own time of life); and, in the second, they can never fill the places of the old ones. They may be better men, or even pleasanter companions, but their thoughts and emotions do not move in the same common plane with our own; the bond of contemporaneity is wanting; we may be ‘in the same boat’ with them, but there is an ever-present sense that we are not going with them for the whole voyage, but must presently disembark at Cape Farewell, while they sail serenely on.

The circle of friends of even an old man is usually, indeed, filled up in some sort of fashion; it is not so much that there are gaps in it as that there are new faces; but, like another Macbeth, with a still keener gift of spiritual insight, he sees the ghost, notwithstanding that the chair is actually occupied. The friends of some men fall off from them into the arms of death much quicker than those of others. In the country, where men live monotonous lives, and are not given to change of habitation, they seem to last the longest; though, on the other hand, when they do depart, it is more difficult to supply their place. A young neighbour may

esteem one as a friend of his father, but he can rarely be won to one's self for one's own sake. The greybeards hang on by themselves in a lessening ring. In town, matters are somewhat different. The differences of age among companions are less marked; but one's contemporaries disappear earlier. This, I am afraid, is owing to the more rapid rate at which some of us Londoners live. For myself, I am a quiet, domestic old creature, and seem to most people, I hope, always to have been so. But, in my time, I have heard the chimes at midnight once or twice—and even oftener.

There is a spot in Bond Street which associates itself, whenever I pass it, with memories of the dead. It is now covered with new buildings, but an hotel—the Clarendon—once stood there, at which it was thought the right thing by young gentlemen of the town to dine; and more especially when (as in my own case) neither their means nor their position in the world justified them in so doing. The place was very expensive—which, then as now, in the case of an hotel, was half-way to a reputation.

It was at the time of the great railway mania, when immense sums of money were given to engineers, and even to engineers' assistants, for surveying and for furnishing plans to lay before the Parliamentary committees within a specified time. Officers of the scientific corps got leave by the score, I remember, at that period, under pretence of 'urgent private affairs,' and spent their holiday in going about the country with a theodolite and a measuring chain, in the service of the Great Diddlesex or other enterprising line. I regret to say that I did something of the kind myself, but I was only an apprentice in an engineering firm in Great George Street, which is perhaps too near the lawyers in Westminster Hall to permit of the cultivation of morals. On the plea of going to visit my Aunt Susan, in Devonshire—whom I am afraid I represented as 'breaking'—I offered my valuable services to a railway company in Wales, and realised what, if measured by their intrinsic value, was a very large sum—two hundred pounds for a week's work—which was *at the rate*, you see, of ten thousand a year, and seemed to admit of a little extravagance. That was how I came to find myself, on the eve of a certain Derby Day, dining with eleven other young gentlemen at the Clarendon.

Some of them had a better right to be indulging in such a luxury than myself (which is not, indeed, saying much for them), but the sum per head which the entertainment cost us represented, in the case of others, a whole week of their incomes, at the very least. There are fast men in plenty in these days, of course, but I don't suppose money was ever spent so quickly and so lavishly

as at the period of which I am speaking. It had come as a wind-fall to most of us, and it went almost as suddenly as it came. As a rule, we had not been used either to the possession of money or to the spending of it; our calling—we were all in the civil engineering line—was a grave and hard-working one, and most of us were ‘seeing life’ and enjoying the pleasures of the town for the first time. I am afraid that first realisation of Fortune’s favours did none of us much good. It gave a taste for dissipation which lasted long after the means of gratifying it were exhausted; nor can I help thinking that among the evils wrought by the railroad speculation at that time may be reckoned incidentally this circumstance, that of those twelve young fellows, so full of health and spirits, who dined together on the occasion I have in my mind, only two besides myself are now in the land of the living.

One of these is old Bruncker, Director of half the railway companies in England, who travels with a dozen golden keys, which free him over every line like an ‘open sesame;’ he has never built a bridge (except to carry himself to fortune) nor made a tunnel, and I am afraid he is best known to the public as a ‘guinea-pig’ (from his habit of sitting at boards and receiving for it that nominal remuneration, though in his case it stands for a much larger sum); but I am told that old Bruncker has shown such extraordinary talents for the manipulation of coal contracts that when he dies he will ‘cut up’ for a hundred thousand pounds—which seems to afford my informants an immense gratification.

The other survivor is Laurence Gray, the inventor of a calculating machine which is to throw Babbage himself into the shade. He once sent me a ticket for a private view of it, and was good enough to explain his system, so far as he had gone with it; that is twenty years ago, and the theory is not perfected yet; but even then the details were sufficient to give me vertigo. The man himself, though constantly dwelling on this Frankenstein of cogs and wheels, has become a machine, and ‘lisps’ (for he has lost half his teeth) ‘in numbers.’

I have no present relations with either Gray or Bruncker, and when I think of them it is as they were in the old times. The former, thoughtful and silent, but with a kindly and generous heart; the latter, a vigorous and sprightly lad of great determination of character. The other nine are dead. That is why those new and staring buildings that stand on the site of the old Clarendon are for me haunted houses; sometimes, as I gaze on them as I pass by, they fade and disappear like a dissolving view, and in their stead I see this picture:

A large and brilliantly-lighted room, with a long table, with a

sumptuous dessert upon it, and the rarest wines. The air is thick with tobacco smoke, but I recognise the faces of the guests distinctly. Some of them are handsome; all of them are young and bright; even the pale cheek of Laurence Gray glows with excitement, and his thoughtful eyes have fire in them. Bruncker is the Chairman of the evening; he was a pushing man even in those days, and made his way to the front of us. His face is flushed, but he could always carry a great deal of liquor, and it only made him more resolute and dogmatic. There is a good deal of noise in the room, but when he speaks his strident voice makes itself heard.

‘Is anyone going to the Derby to-morrow?’

It is curious, and shows how new are the pleasures of the town to us, that no one happens to be going; we probably knew more about the nature of odds than most young men of our age, but horse-racing had small attraction for us.

‘Suppose we all go together!’ continued Bruncker, in tones that were fated to convince many a Parliamentary committee in years to come; ‘it will be great fun; we will have a drag that will hold us all. I’ll drive.’

The idea was favourably received; we had all been swearing eternal friendship, and were very willing to prolong our companionship into the next day. ‘But,’ said one, ‘can we get a drag at this eleventh hour? They will probably be all engaged.’

‘Of course we can get one,’ replied Bruncker contemptuously, ‘if you don’t mind having to pay.’

The objector protested very earnestly that he didn’t mind, and expressed generally, but briefly, his sovereign contempt for all considerations of expense.

Bruncker rang for pen and ink, and wrote a note to a well-known livery-stable keeper in the neighbourhood:

‘Send a drag with four horses to my chambers to-morrow at nine o’clock.’ He liked the idea of such an imposing vehicle starting from his own rooms, and had therefore arranged for our assembling there.

‘But,’ remonstrated the head waiter, when informed that he was to send round to Mr. Martingale’s at once, ‘the office have been shut up for these three hours.’

‘Then ring till somebody opens it,’ exclaimed Bruncker in a voice of thunder. ‘Go, sir.’

In half an hour, during which we had grown no soberer, the man came back with the information that every drag at Mr. Martingale’s disposal was engaged for the next day, but that he thought some arrangement might be made if Mr. Bruncker and

his friends were prepared to pay for it. The hire of the drag in that case would be 80/.

‘The drag is ours, gentlemen, I conclude,’ said the Chairman. ‘By all means,’ exclaimed everybody in chorus; not the least allusion being made to the monstrous cost. To some, indeed, the fact of the expedition being so expensive was one of its chief recommendations; to others, the reflection that the expense would be divided among so many swept away their scruples; while in a few cases, as was afterwards discovered, the matter was utterly indifferent, since they had already come to the bottom of their purses, and could pay their shares with equal facility—that is to say, could not pay them at all—whether they were in pounds or shillings.

We were all pretty punctual at Bruncker’s rooms the next morning, and really not much the worse for our dissipation. The shakiness of the knees which is one of the lightest penalties inflicted upon old stagers for sitting up at night, and, above all, that intense desire to ignore the daylight and go to bed again, were unknown to us young fellows. There were brandy-and-sodas for every one, and our spirits rose like the corks. Our host apologised in his lordly way for not being able to give us breakfast at so short a notice, but promised to provide us with supper; and at 10 o’clock we took our places on the drag. Of course, Bruncker drove, and though there may have been better whips, I will lay my life that nobody ever looked as though he were half so good a one. It is my private impression that he had never driven four-in-hand in his life, but the leaders, who turned short-round and stared at him at starting, seemed so convinced by that scrutiny of his indomitable disposition, that they backed into their proper places, and maintained them with great docility throughout the journey. We were all on the roof except Laurence Gray, who had selected an inside place among the hampers, with the object, I believe, of calculating at his leisure the distance travelled by the number of revolutions of the wheels. We were a very merry party, and remained so—almost—to the end of the chapter.

It is not necessary to describe the humours of that oft-depicted scene, the Derby Day. There was no railroad in those times, so that ‘the road’ was much more thronged than it is at present, but otherwise matters were much as they now are. Vast clouds of dust, with drink enough to lay it; the hum of innumerable voices, like very big B’s among the hives; ten thousand faces turned to the right like sheet-lightning, to watch the horses, then—as they rounded the corner—turned to the left like a swift eclipse; an unnatural silence, with a sense of tension, and then a

roar that shakes the earth. Who has not seen these things for once in his life, misses a striking page—most brilliantly illustrated—of the Book of Human Life, while for the philosopher it affords reflection in plenty. We twelve were not philosophers, nor anything like it, to begin with, and before the day was over became slightly affected with—well, the novelty and excitement of the situation. Perhaps it was the watching the *rouge et noir* tables (which were then winked at); or the combinations of colour exhibited by the jockeys' jackets; or even the stimulating air of the downs; but the opinion of those who experienced the sensation in question—which was that of occasional vertigo—attributed it to the novelty of the scene. Of one thing they were positively certain—'shirtin'—that it had nothing whatever to do with the champagne from Fortnum & Mason's, a most respectable firm, who sell nothing deleterious; and none of us—especially the sufferers, who surely ought to have known—had taken more than a few glasses of it, and those 'hard frost' (half froth). However, the effect of it all was to stimulate—to a somewhat morbid degree, perhaps—our sense of right, and more particularly of the right of way, and that being impeded on the road home by a waggon full of 'roughs' or rowdies, we all left our vehicle and fought them on the road, except Bruncker, who remained on the box-seat, like Napoleon on an eminence, suggesting various military manœuvres, and Laurence Gray, who, finding himself (as he afterwards protested) utterly unable to open the coach door, occupied himself with calculating the relative probabilities of danger to life from the impact of the human fist and of that of a ginger-beer bottle, with which missile our opponents were well supplied. In the end, we left nine of them in the ditch, and having dispersed the rest, we resumed our journey with much satisfaction.

In the very flush of victory, however, a sad catastrophe awaited us. We came presently to a spot where, beside the crowded road, stood a public-house. Before it was a four-wheeled vehicle with two women in it, their male companions having gone into the inn to refresh themselves, and left them there. One of the two, I happened to remark (for one noticed those things in those days), was exceedingly good-looking, or, rather, she would have been so but for a deep scar upon her left temple. The scar was in the form of a cross, but the young lady herself was undoubtedly a Jewess. Her companion, who was an elderly person, seemed to be alarmed as we swept by, for there was very little space to spare; but the girl seemed not unconscious of my admiring gaze, and, I flattered myself, appreciated it. Then all of a sudden there was a crash; the four-wheeled vehicle seemed to tumble to pieces

like a house of cards, and the two women were thrown under our wheels.

I was off the drag in an instant, and, with one or two others, helped to carry the sufferers into the inn. The elder woman was not much hurt, but the other's eyes were closed and she remained utterly unconscious—indeed, to all appearances, dead. Their male friends were not only alarmed, but very violent in their indignation against us. In my opinion, we had not been much to blame, and if the four-wheeler had not been the most ramshackly and rotten of vehicles it would have suffered little or nothing from the contact with our drag, which, as it happened, was going but slowly. But at the moment, I was too much horrified—as, indeed, we all were—at the misfortune that had taken place, to entertain such considerations, and, far from defending ourselves, could only express contrition. I felt very acutely for the husband of the young woman, a Mr. Abrahams, from the neighbourhood of the Minories, not in himself interesting (I remember he squinted intensely—a natural blemish which is often aggravated by excitement), but invested for the moment with a natural sympathy and commiseration. He raved about his two motherless children, and against the wretches who had made them orphans, in a very distressing manner, nor was he much comforted when a doctor arrived—we did not know from whence, but he looked as if he had been to the Derby like the rest of us—and pronounced the case to be a very dangerous one. After doing all we could—which, indeed, was not much—and again expressing our great regret, Bruncker gave his address (he was the only one of us at that time who could boast of a respectable one), and we drove away in a very depressed condition. If we had been older men, or medical students, we should, doubtless, have taken the matter much more coolly, but the possibility of our having been the cause of death to a fellow-creature—‘and such a good-looking one, too!’ as one of us observed with genuine pathos—affected us immensely.

So completely was the pluck taken out of us, that I believe half a dozen hostile costermongers could have defeated the whole party, and I need not say that we drove very slowly and carefully the rest of the way. I assert with confidence that our grief was, in the main, unselfish, but no doubt the motives for it were a little mixed. Supposing anything should happen more than had happened to the poor young woman, a public inquiry into the matter would, to some of us, have been very disagreeable. My own respected employers, for example, imagined that I was still soothing the last hours of my Aunt Susan—which had been over for some time; that is, the plans, elevations, and sections of the

Welsh Railway were over, only, as I had leave for a month, I was making the most of my holiday. And, though 'Aunt Sallies' are relatives often to be found at the Derby, Aunt Susans are not; and I foresaw, in the case of any coroner's inquest in which I might be examined as a witness, some very unpleasant complications. Considerations of a similar kind were pressing on many of us, and Bruncker himself, who was somewhat our senior and already getting into practice on his own account, was not a whit less anxious to avoid publicity in such a matter than ourselves. An engineer—even a civil one—often kills a good many people, but only in a professional way, and a verdict of manslaughter on the Queen's highway (and *not* on a viaduct) is very far from a recommendation to him in the way of business.

However, by the time we reached London, affairs had begun to wear for us a less serious air, and, under the influence of Bruncker's supper—which was a very good one—the cloud arising from our late mischance dispersed itself still more rapidly. We had finished our meal, and were engaged in discussing an immense bowl of gin punch, for the mixing of the materials of which Laurence Gray had as great a reputation at that time as he has since acquired for 'combinations' of another kind, when there was a knock at the door, and there entered, unannounced, a pale stranger. If it had been *pallida Mors* herself, it could scarcely have alarmed us more, and, indeed, something told us at once that it was one of her messengers. 'Who the deuce are you, sir?' inquired Bruncker, audacious to the last, but as quick as any of us to grasp the nature of the visitor's errand.

'You are Mr. Bruncker, I believe,' returned the man in grave and solemn tones; 'I have been commissioned by my neighbour, Mr. Moss Abrahams, of No. 3 Castor Street, Minories, to communicate to you a sad piece of intelligence. His wife—the lady with whose vehicle you came in such violent collision this evening ~~was~~ it was standing before the "Swan with Two Necks" at Harly—is dead.'

There was a universal expression of horror.

'Of course you regret it, gentlemen,' continued the visitor, looking round the well-furnished apartment with an air of dejection that was strangely combined with the keen glance of an appraiser. 'Unhappily, fine words butter—I mean, no expressions of sympathy can restore the departed to her bereaved ones. I am come for your names and addresses, that you may be summoned to the inquest which will, of course, be held on the unfortunate lady's remains.'

'One moment,' said Bruncker, before anyone could do more

than shiver; 'I conclude I shall not be overstepping the limits of possibility in supposing that you are an attorney?'

The stranger bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment—indeed, he had looked much more like a sheriff's officer, a class of person with whom some of us were personally acquainted—and produced his card.

'Mr. Moss Davis, Castor Street.'

'What! another Moss? Any relation of Mr. Moss Abrahams?' inquired Bruncker.

'A connection by marriage only; I am the brother'—here his voice, which was a stertorous snuffle, seemed to change its sex and become a snuffle—'the brother of the deceased party.'

Bruncker looked at me significantly: 'I think, if you and Gray were to stop here, and the rest were to go away, we should be better able to discuss this matter with Mr. Davis; we are rather too large a party for a business consultation.'

'Yes, curiously enough, exactly a jury,' said the attorney. After which professional remark he again gave way to pathos. As the rest of the party, save the three who had been excepted, were already (and I am bound to say, with some alacrity) leaving the room, he, however, at once recovered himself sufficiently to demand their names and addresses. 'You may depend,' he said to each, with much earnestness and unction, as though he were giving notice of the arrival of a hamper of game or a birthday present, 'upon receiving your summonses in due course.' No nine young gentlemen of honest antecedents were probably ever so frightened by a limb of the law before.

I could see that Bruncker himself was uneasy, and that Laurence Gray was calculating certain chances which for once had nothing to do with mathematics. 'Would it improve our position, do you think,' he whispered, 'for Bruncker to throw the attorney out of window?' I replied in the same low voice that I thought not; but he only shook his head, mentioned our height from the ground in feet and inches, and muttered something about 'the advantage of bringing public opinion to bear upon our side.'

As soon as we four were alone, Bruncker began to swagger. 'These young fellows are now gone, Mr. Davis, and let me tell you you have only men of business to deal with. What you have come about is, in two words—pecuniary compensation.'

'I do assure, you, sir, upon my honour,' replied the attorney, with a sigh and a glance at the gas chandelier, 'that nothing was further from my thoughts. Of course, I mourn my sister's untimely demise—cut off, as one may say, poor thing, in her very prime, and the prop and mainstay of her infant family; she also had the

management of her husband's business establishment—one of the largest second-hand furniture shops in the Minorities—so that half his income has died with her; but I also feel for you young men as having become—I do not wish to use strong language—but, to speak plainly, you, Mr. Bruncker, will undoubtedly be indicted as a principal, and the rest of your friends as accessories, for manslaughter.'

'What nonsense!' exclaimed Bruncker; 'it was a mere accident that might have happened to anybody; we are all very sorry, of course, but we couldn't help it. I was driving very carefully, and by no means fast.'

'Only five and a half miles an hour,' exclaimed Laurence Gray; 'I happened to be looking at the spokes at the moment, and gauged the rate exactly.'

'And you were all of you quite sober?' said the attorney, with a smile of incredulity that was quite sickening. 'Not ready to brawl and fight, I dare say, nor to drive over unoffending persons for the mere fun of the thing!'

'Good heavens!' cried I indignantly, 'what rubbish you talk. We were all as quiet as mice and as grave as Judges.'

'I am delighted to hear it,' returned Mr. Davis coolly, taking up his hat as if to go, 'for, in that case, I have made a complete mistake, and am addressing the wrong parties. The fact is, we have at least half a dozen witnesses—of humble calling, but irreproachable character—who, after your departure from the "Swan with Two Necks," came, unsought, to furnish us with certain evidence; they say that the occupants of your drag were disgracefully drunk, and only a few hundred yards from the inn had absolutely descended from the vehicle and made an unprovoked assault upon them; of course, if they are mistaken as to your identity, that is another matter; but I can only say that it would have been hard for *their* nearest and dearest relatives to have identified some of them.'

Then we all remembered how we had got off the drag and fought the roughs, an incident which, dwarfed by the subsequent catastrophe, up to that moment had escaped our recollection.

'I believe there was some little previous altercation about the rule of the road,' admitted Bruncker.

'I believe there *was*,' said Mr. Davis. 'Well, the question is, gentlemen, are you prepared to stand your trial? If a verdict of manslaughter is returned, as it undoubtedly will be, you will, of course, have to do it. It is *your* affair, of course, but—' Here he made a sudden stop; then exclaiming: 'However, that is no matter; good evening,' he rose and laid his hand upon the door,

‘But how are you to prevent this verdict of manslaughter?’ inquired Bruncker, who, it was plain enough, was now thoroughly frightened.

‘Pardon me, sir,’ said the attorney, ‘but that is *my* affair. It is very difficult—very difficult indeed—amid the glare of publicity and the Paul Prying of the press to burke a public inquiry; it is a thing nothing would induce me to attempt except from a very strong motive of compassion for the youth and inexperience of an offender, or offenders,’ he added with professional preciseness; ‘but it is a thing that can be *done* if you have money to pay for it.’

It was curious to contrast the slowness and hesitation with which our visitor had hinted at the dangers of ‘squaring’ justice, and the benevolent feelings which were actuating him, with the rapid jerk with which he brought out the last pregnant sentence—‘if you have the money to pay for it.’ All the rest seemed somehow laboured and mechanical, whereas the peroration appeared to gush forth as naturally as water from a spring, and also with a certain impetuosity, as though up to that moment he had kept his thumb on it. It was singular, too, how the obvious greed of the man at once seemed to quench our own regretful sympathies for the victim whose cause he was espousing; we beheld before us no longer a ruined home and motherless orphans, but a compensation claim.

‘With business men,’ continued Mr. Davis, perceiving that he had abandoned his rôle of Injured Relative somewhat too abruptly, ‘it is idle to waste time which is valuable to them upon merely sentimental considerations. My unfortunate brother-in-law has been bereaved; his residence, including his business premises, has been made desolate; but what he feels is, it is no use crying over spilled milk, and that he must make the best of it, and the *most* of it.’ It struck us all that it was rather early for the widowed Mr. Moss Abrahams to take this extremely practical view of the matter, and I ventured to say as much.

‘My good young sir,’ said the attorney, becoming, what with snuffle and vehemence, almost inarticulate, ‘vat damned nonsense you do talk!’ Then he explained to us more quietly, but still with *v*’s instead of *w*’s, that there was not a moment to lose in the matter; if the inquest was to be avoided, and he gave us to understand that such a contingency was possible (‘might be worked’ was his exact expression), the necessary steps must be taken that very night. ‘Otherwise,’ and Mr. Davis threw up a dirty but jewelled hand dramatically, as though appealing to the higher powers, ‘*this* will certainly happen, or may I be struck blind. The jury will be summoned, and *you* will be summoned,

and the verdict vill be vat I said. Or even if it is not so, but accidental death is recorded, ve brings our action—that is, Moss does through me—and for his loss, and the destruction of his hearth and home and pizziness, do you think, vat with law expenses and the rest, that the damages will cost the lot of you less than 2,000*l.*?—no, not a stiver; yet he vill let you off—mind, it must be to-night; you must make up your mints now or never—ve will let you off for fifteen hundred.'

It was dreadful to hear him, he was so desperately in earnest; and still more frightful to see him. He threw about his horrible fingers in all directions, as though they were wreaths of roses (they were red, but the parallel went no further, or went the other way); finally, when he came to his 'Fifteen hundred,' he threw back both his hands, and with such violence that he upset the punch-bowl.

'I will see you hanged first!' exclaimed Bruncker furiously.

'Vat? Perhaps I shall see *you* hanged! You think it too much? I have not said one word about the horse and carriage—a peautiful horse and very handsome carriage. I have said nothing about Moss's feelings. You will hear my counsel on that subject at the trial, unless, indeed, you shall be all in prison. I have purposely, and because you are all so young, put our damages at the very lowest figure; but, since you object, this is our last offer: you may just take it or leave it: we will say 1,200*l.*—just a bagatelle of one hundred pounds apiece for killing Moss's wife and the mother of his children.'

Stated in that light, as though manslaughter were a luxury, the cost was not excessive; but it was a frightful sum to pay for having gone to the Derby, and without having lost a single bet. But, after much discussion, during which Mr. Davis often pulled out his watch impatiently, and could in no wise be induced to abate his terms, we agreed—upon the understanding that we would hear nothing more of the deceased Mrs. Abrahams—to satisfy his demands. The injury that we felt would be done to us in a professional point of view in the future (in Bruncker's case, indeed, in the present), and the probability of our losing our places in this and that house of business, should the affair get wind, weighed more with us than Mr. Davis's hard terms; and then, as that astute gentleman had observed, 'it was only a hundred pounds apiece.'

The comfort arising from the great principle of division was, however, illusory; for, as it turned out, only half a dozen of us ever paid a farthing. The punishment had to be borne by those who could bear it, while the rest escaped scot free, and the principal sufferers were Bruncker, Gray, and myself.

On the other hand, we had the satisfaction of another private interview with Mr. Moss Davis, who showed a marvellous facility for raising money, and realising, though at some loss, certain doubtful securities. We thought it better to deal with him than with any friend of our own in his respectable profession, so as to keep the whole proceeding under the rose. What he did to suppress the facts of the catastrophe we never knew, but he sent us a cutting from a newspaper—the ‘Harly Times’—describing the inquest ‘on my deeply lamented sister Deborah,’ in which the coroner and jury seemed very easily satisfied with the evidence that produced their verdict of ‘Accidental Death’; but perhaps, as Bruncker said, they had more reasons for satisfaction than appeared in the report. At all events, the matter was settled, and, like all other incidents in our lives, notwithstanding the gigantic proportions they may have assumed in their time, it dwindled away in the revolving years and was well-nigh forgotten.

It was brought back, however, to my remembrance so late as last September. On the steamboat from London to Ramsgate—a voyage I often take in these my declining years, for the sake of sea air—I met a vision of my youth: she was a young woman, of course; plump, black-eyed, and, though

With one of those noses
Peculiar to ladies called Levi and Moses,

exceedingly good-looking. My admiration of the fair sex is now, I need hardly say, purely Platonic; but there was something in the look of that young person which caused a vibration in the chords of my being. I thought of *Rebecca*, of *Jessica*, and then, with a flash, my mind recalled the heroine of a certain drama in real life, Mrs. Moss Abrahams of the Minorities.

If the Wheel of Time—but no, that metaphor is too realistic—if five-and-twenty years had not rolled over her since *we* had rolled over her, on that unhappy drag, I could have sworn that there she stood. Of course it could not be so, and as to its being her ghost, the way in which the young lady in question discussed shrimps and porter during the voyage put any spiritual theory on the subject to flight at once. While discussing these dainties, she chanced to drop her parasol on the deck, which gave me the opportunity of addressing her in restoring it. She was frank and affable, and informed me that her ‘pa and ma’ were sea-sick down below.

‘If I did not know from certain circumstances that the thing was impossible,’ said I, ‘I should have said that I had had the honour of your mother’s acquaintance; you are so like somebody——’

‘But perhaps you do know her,’ broke in the impetuous young

creature, laughing, 'for she and I are thought as like as two peas. When she was a child she got a blow on her forehead'—and she pointed to the very place where the cicatrix had been visible on the deceased lady's brow—'which, she pretends to us, spoiled her beauty, or else her picture is the very image of me.'

'And may I ask her name?' I inquired earnestly.

'Well, there now, you ain't a-going to make pa jealous, I do hope,' she giggled; 'he's always a-talking about ma's old flames. Well, my name, and I suppose therefore *her* name, is Montefiore.'

I uttered a sigh of relief, for the whole affair had been getting too mysterious and complicated to suit my state of health. My medical man says I am 'to think of nothing'—except, I suppose, about Christmas time, when his little account comes in and demands attention.

I took no further notice of Miss Montefiore, but when her parents came on deck at the conclusion of the voyage, I could not help casting a curious glance in their direction. The man I might have seen before, or not—he squinted wofully; the woman (notwithstanding that her complexion was a little green at the moment) I most certainly recognised. The cruciform mark on the corner of her forehead, though a little paler than of old, was the mark I had noticed on that Derby day, a little before the four-wheeler upset; and though she might now call herself Montefiore, she was once Mrs. Abrahams of the Minories, I was positively certain.

'Come along, Deb,' cried her spouse; 'you'll be all right when you gets to land.'

And had not Mr. Moss Davis spoken to us, with tears in his eyes, of his 'lamented sister Deborah?'

I followed them to their lodgings, and set down their address in my pocket-book, and then went to my hotel to think the matter over. That a fraud had been committed upon us was certain, and a fraud of a very clumsy kind. Mr. Davis must have trusted greatly to the 'youth and inexperience' that had aroused his sympathies, or he would never have ventured on a scheme so audacious. Moreover, he had 'rushed us,' as the phrase goes—given us no time for reflection—while at the same time we had been consumed with apprehensions on our own account, and, like most young fellows, had been eager to 'get the confounded thing over and done with at any price.' When I now came to think about it, we had never had the least proof of Mrs. Abrahams' death, except Mr. Moss Davis's word of honour (which may be eliminated from the matter on the principle of *de minimis non curat lex*), and a cutting from the country newspaper describing the inquest. Mr. Davis had probably fur-

nished the interesting 'copy' to that journal himself, and paid handsomely for its publication.

I confess I did not feel much inclined to rake up the matter after so many years, but, in justice to Gray and Bruncker, I thought it right to acquaint them with my discovery. I accordingly wrote to both of them, and received the following replies. That from the great mechanician was in a lady's hand :

Dear Sir,—I have endeavoured, though it has been a matter of some difficulty, to draw my uncle's attention to the subject of your note. He is just now very much occupied with his great invention, which is approaching completion. He seems to agree with you that the process of extraction [I had thus alluded to the probability of our getting our money back from Mr. Montefiore, *né* Abrahams, but the lady had evidently not seen my letter] would be very tedious. He bids me tell you that you had better not try it beyond twenty-four places of decimals.

Yours truly,

ANNIE GRAY.

Well, *that* was not very encouraging ; and Bruncker's answer was still less so :

Dear Sir,—I have no recollection whatever of the disgraceful incident to which you allude. If you ask my advice, however, as a practical man, as to your own course of conduct, it seems to me that you yourself, on the occasion in question, entered into a conspiracy to defeat the ends of justice, and that the quieter you keep and the less you say about the matter the better.

Yours faithfully,

JACOB BRUNCKER.

I have taken his advice, and never attempted to recoup myself for the money disbursed so unnecessarily on that Very Expensive Derby.

Coursing.

Yet if for sylvan sports thy bosom glow,
Let thy fleet greyhound urge his flying foe.
With what delight the rapid course I view,
How does my eye the circling race pursue!

GAY, Rural Sports.

COURSING with greyhounds, though, as the author of 'The Booke of Huntinge' says, 'doubtlesse a noble pastime, and as meet for nobility and gentlemen as any of the other kinds of Venerie,' probably was a mode of hunting of much more recent origin than that department of the chase in which hounds pursued the game by scent instead of by sight alone. It certainly was so in the classical world. Homer, indeed, has references to a sport very like coursing, as in the 'Iliad' where he compares Ulysses and Diomedes pursuing Dolon:

As when two skilful hounds the leveret wind;

or praises in the 'Odyssey' the swiftness and keenness of sight and smell of the famous hound 'Argus':—

His eye how piercing, and his scent how true
To wind the vapour in the tainted dew!

'but we cannot allow such a hound,' says a learned translator of Arrian's 'Cynegeticus,' 'within the precincts of a coursing kennel, where speed and keensightedness are the essential properties; to stoop to "the tainted green," with the sagacity of a harrier, invalidates the claim.'

'Greyhounds,' says old Gervase Markham, 'are onely for the coursing of all sorts of wilde beasts by main swiftnesse of foot; they doe not anything more than their eyes govern them unto;' and such dogs we have the authority of the younger Xenophon for saying were quite unknown in ancient Greece.

Ovid is the first classical author who refers to coursing. The accuracy of this description and the correctness of its technical phraseology imply not only that the poet was a practical courser and derived his imagery from experience in the field, but that the sport must have had a systematic form and been governed by a well-established set of rules in Ovid's day. It probably was introduced into the southern parts of the Roman empire, some little time before the poet lived, from the country of the Galli or Celts,

The northern plains of Europe appear to have been the birthplace of coursing; and the greyhound is generally referred to by Greek and Roman writers as the Gallic dog, the Celtic dog, or as *Vertragus*, a name that is generally supposed to mean a dog adapted for coursing over plains or open country.

Casual allusions to the *Vertragus* acer in Martial and other authors are all the records of coursing we have till we come to the time of Adrian and the Antonini, when we get a full and perfect picture of the pastime in the elaborate '*Cynegeticus*' of Arrian of Nicomedia in Bithynia, 'the younger Xenophon' as he calls himself. His object, he tells us, was to supply an omission in the treatise on hunting of the son of Gryllus, who knew nothing of coursing, and accordingly the Bithynian—like Xenophon, 'a sportsman, a general, and a philosopher'—enters minutely into all the details of kennel management, the 'points' of a properly bred greyhound, and the laws and practice of coursing, in a manner that his best translator and annotator tells us has left 'little to be added to our knowledge in any department of coursing.'

The classical history of the leash may be said to terminate in the fourth century. Long before then, however, we come upon allusions to the existence of greyhounds in our own islands. Nemesian, a Carthaginian writer on the chase in the third century, speaks of these British dogs being exported to Rome; and we know that, in the reign of Theodosius, Flavian sent seven Celtic or Irish dogs—*septem Scoticorum canum oblatio*—of the greatest speed and fire, to grace the spectacle of his brother Symmachus at Rome. Though Ireland was at that time the country of the Scoti, there is little reason to doubt that similar dogs of the chase were known in what is now Scotland; for, besides the statements in Hector Boece, Fordun and other old Scottish chroniclers of the high estimation in which greyhounds were held in those early times, we have the more trustworthy evidence of the sculptured stones of the North of Scotland, on many of which are stirring pictures of the chase in which lithe greyhounds are depicted in hot pursuit of their quarry. These invaluable pictures of old manners, which have been made accessible to us by Dr. John Stuart's Spalding Club volumes, have been set down by the best authorities to dates from the third to the ninth centuries.

We have evidence of the renhund, or greyhound, being an inmate of Anglo-Saxon kennels as early as the days of Aelfric of Mercia. The Saxons got these dogs from Wales; they always seem to have been favourite hounds, and there can be little doubt from illustrations in old MSS. that coursing was an Anglo-Saxon pastime, and that the hounds there depicted in the leash in couples

were slipped at game very much as greyhounds always have been.

For a long time after the Norman Conquest we know nothing of coursing, though there are frequent incidental allusions to the greyhound and his high repute, but principally as distinctive of the rank and grandeur of his possessor. A greyhound was among the most highly prized of gifts in times when the custom of making presents was an important point in social ceremony. It was an especial favourite with ladies and with the clergy. In the old metrical romance of 'Sir Eglamore' a princess tells the knight that she would, as an especial mark of her favour, give him a greyhound, so swift in deer-coursing that nothing could escape him:—

Sir, if you be on hunting bound,
I shall you give a good greyhound
That is dun as a doe.
For as I am true gentlewoman,
There was never deer that he at ran
That might escape him fro.

While among the gifts the King of Hungary promises his daughter in the 'Squyer of lowe Degre' is

A leese of her hounds with her to strake.

We find Richard I. giving to Henry de Grey of Codnor permission to hunt the hare in any lands belonging to the crown; and probably this refers to coursing, especially as we know that King John had a large stud of greyhounds which he used in hare-coursing. It was in the reign of Edward I., however, that the sport was first established on a scientific footing, with regular rules for its guidance. Edward was himself a courser, if we may judge by a curious tenure by which Bertram de Criol held the manor of Seaton in Kent from the king; he was to provide a veltrarius, or greyhound keeper, to lead three greyhounds when the king went into Gascony, so long as a pair of shoes, valued at four pence, should last him.

Though the hare was always considered the most appropriate quarry for the greyhound, and the field instructions of Arrian refer almost exclusively to hare-coursing, yet, both in his day and at later times, we find the deer, the wolf, the fox, and even sometimes the wild cat, coursed with greyhounds. Even yet, though the hare alone competes in speed with the longtail, his rough-coated brother, the deerhound, is sometimes slipped at a stag, and hunts him by sight alone. In old British field sports, however, deer-coursing held an important place, and many stories are told

us in old writers of the prowess of famous dogs in this sport of high repute.

Father Augustin Hay, in his 'Genealogie of the Sainte Claires of Rosslyn,' tells a story of a deer-coursing in the days of King Robert the Bruce, a passionate lover of the chase, by which the St. Clairs gained a fine tract of territory near Edinburgh. When peace had been restored in Scotland, one day there was a great hunting in the Pentland Forest, at which a white deer was seen, which Bruce said he had often coursed, but that his hounds 'could never prevail, and he desired his nobles if they had any swifter dogs to try them. They, hearing the king's speech, denied they had any could kill the deer.' Sir William St. Clair, however, jocularly said that he would wager his head his two hounds, Help and Hold, would pull down the deer before she could cross a stream called the March Burn. Bruce, 'taking indignation that his hounds should be speediest, would have him abide by his word, and laid against his head all Pentland Hills and Pentland Moor with the forest.' The worthy father goes on to relate in great detail how Sir William went on horseback with his hounds to the appointed spot; how beaters with dogs drove out the deer, at which Help and Hold were slipped. The hind managed to reach the middle of the stream before the hounds turned her back and slew her on the right side to save St. Clair's head and win for him the lands of Pentland in 'free forestrie.'

Here we see a method of coursing in which two kinds of hounds were employed: dogs of scent to follow up and drive out the prey instead of 'beaters,' while the greyhounds were placed outside the covert ready to be slipped when the game appeared in sight. This is the sport Scott describes in 'Marmion':—

And foresters in greenwood trim
Lead in the leash the gazehounds grim,
Attentive, as the brachet's bay
From the dark covert drove the prey,
To slip them as he drove away.
The startled quarry bounds amain,
As fast the gallant greyhounds strain.

It is a variety of coursing, however, that the oldest British authorities condemn; thus, Edmund, Duke of York, who wrote a treatise on hunting called the 'Mayster of Game,' in the latter part of the fourteenth century for the use of the young prince afterwards Henry V., says if, 'spaynels and greyhounds' be in the same field 'the spaynel will make al the ryot and al the harme.' This treatise of Edmund de Langley's is the oldest English work on coursing we have. An earlier work, 'The Crafte of Huntynge,'

by Twety and Gifford, huntsmen to Edward II., only mentions the greyhound once, and makes no allusion at all to hare-coursing, so that the sport must have greatly advanced in importance as the fourteenth century grew old.

From the 'Mayster of Game,' and such subsequent works as the celebrated 'Book of St. Albans,' of Dame Juliana Berners, we get minute descriptions of the various kinds of coursing in fashion in olden times. Deer were coursed in forest and in paddock: in the one case the game was free, but in the paddock the quarry were enclosed in a portion of the park railed off with palings. At one end of this long enclosure were erected stands for the accommodation of the spectators, while at the other the game was kept confined in a covert. At this end were the greyhounds ready to be slipped when the deer were driven out of the cover, and matters were so arranged that dogs and deer went along in full view of the 'trists,' or stands on which the spectators were. This was the kind of pastime witnessed by Queen Elizabeth at Lord Montecute's seat, Cowdrey in Sussex, in 1591, when her Majesty one day after dinner saw from a turret 'sixteen bucks, all having fayre lawe, pulled down with greyhounds in a lawn.'

In all the records of coursing we have glanced at hitherto the emulation seems entirely to have been looked on as between the dogs on one hand, and the game on the other, a trial of speed between hare, or deer and hound, and not at all as a struggle for victory between the two hounds slipped at the game. In fact, frequently only one dog was slipped, and sometimes we find three slipped all together.

It is not till the reign of Elizabeth that we find any traces of match-coursing, which was usually in enclosures after deer. Hare-coursing, however, was a fashionable sport in her reign, and in the laws of the leash, compiled by the Duke of Norfolk in her reign, we find rules laid down that not above a brace of greyhounds should course a hare.

We may see from the frequent allusions in Shakspeare and his brother-poets how popular coursing was then. King Henry V. sees his soldiers, impatient for the assault of Harfleur,

Stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start.

When Sly wakes from his drunken slumber his

Greyhounds are as swift
As breathed stags, ay, fleetier than the roe.

Ben Jonson's references show he must have witnessed many a

course; while, to give one more instance, Drayton has a long and accurate description of a coursing in his 'Polyolbion.'

The first public coursing meeting in Britain must have originated about this time at the great annual gathering of the country people of Gloucestershire, among the Cotswold hills. From an early period these good folk seem to have met in the Vale of Evesham to hold a primitive cattle show and pass a day in jovial festivity. Then games were added to the day's proceedings, and among them 'coursing of silver-footed greyhounds,' for which pastime the Cotswold Games became very famous, especially when Robert Dover, a Warwickshire attorney with strong views against Puritanism, resolved to enlarge and systematize the Cotswold gathering as a practical antidote to the kill-joy Puritan teaching. This he did in the reign of King James, but the public coursing match was part of the old programme, for it is immortalised by Shakspeare in the opening scene of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' when Slender asks Page:—

How does your fallow greyhound, sir?

I heard say, he was outrun on Cotsall.

Page. It could not be judged, sir.

'The phrase, "I heard say he was outrun on Cotsall," can obviously only refer,' says Mr. E. W. Gosse, 'to a competitive coursing in which Page's greyhound failed to win the first prize. It is remarkable that this passage does not occur in the quartos, and rests on the authority of the first folio, but it would be very rash to argue from this fact, as has been done, however, that the Cotswold Games began between 1619 and 1623. There can be no doubt that at the latter date they had the notoriety which follows twenty years of success. It was made a great point by the humane Dover that not the killing of the hare, but the winning of the prize, should be the aim men set before them in competing. He desired to supersede hunting as much as possible by instituting these games of skill.'

In a quaint frontispiece to a rare volume of poems published in 1636, composed by Ben Jonson, Drayton, Randolph, and many others of the best poets of the time, we see Dover in full costume, on horseback, with his wand of office as ruler of the sports, while behind him are depicted scenes of coursing, horse-racing, dancing, feasting, wrestling and other sports in his programme. This woodcut is reproduced in the 'Book of Days,' and recently the Rev. A. B. Grosart has reprinted the very rare little volume, the 'Annalia Dubrensia'—of which it is the frontispiece.

The Cotswold Games, like other mirthful gatherings, were put

down during the Puritan rule, and though they were revived again at the Restoration, their new lease of life seems to have been short, and public coursing cannot be said to have existed again until Lord Orford founded the Swaffham Club in 1776. This club was restricted to twenty-six members; in the Ashdown Park, Malton and other clubs founded in the latter years of the last century, the membership was also very small, and none but members could enter dogs at the meetings. It was not until about half a century ago that the first public open coursing meeting was held in Glasgow. How numerous such meetings have become since then we all know nowadays, when the doings of greyhounds at all sorts of gatherings from lordly Altcar to the humblest local meeting fill up the gap in sporting life between the close and the opening of the legitimate racing season.

With the absorbing attention given to match-coursing now-a-days, private coursing and the merry gatherings it gave rise to are in danger of falling aside: and yet one cannot help thinking how much more real sport there was with Arrian after his fine bitch Horne, or 'out wi' the grews' on the Ettrick hills with Christopher North and the Shepherd, than at public coursing meetings now-a-days, with all their sordid accompaniments subordinating all interests to that of betting.

Lockhart, in his 'Life of Scott,' records one of these pleasant coursings on Newark Hill, in which Sir Walter, with Sir Humphry Davy, Dr. Wollaston, Mackenzie 'the Man of Feeling,' and a merry party of other guests took part. 'A faithful sketch of what you at this instant see,' said Lockhart to Sir William Allan the painter, as they were starting from Abbotsford, 'would be more interesting a hundred years hence than the grandest so-called historical painting that you will ever exhibit at Somerset House.'

'Coursing on such a mountain as Newark Hill is not like the same sport over a set of firm English pastures. There were gulfs to be avoided and bogs enough to be threaded; many a stiff nag stuck fast—many a bold rider measured his length among the peat-bogs, and another stranger to the ground besides Davy plunged neck deep into a treacherous well-head, which, till they were floundering in it, had borne all the appearance of a piece of delicate green turf. When Sir Humphry emerged from his involuntary bath, his habiliments garnished with mud, slime and mangled water cresses, Sir Walter received him with a triumphant *Encore!* But the philosopher had his revenge, for joining soon afterwards in a brisk gallop, Scott put Sibyl Grey to a leap beyond her prowess, and lay humbled in the ditch, while Davy, who was

better mounted, cleared it and him at a bound. Happily there was little damage done.'

Scott was always a passionate lover of coursing, and nothing delighted him more, as he often tells us, than to take part in the great annual coursing day, 'the Abbotsford Hunt,' or 'at humbler sport,' with a friend or two, after his

Greyhounds true.
O'er holt or hill there never flew,
From alip or leash there never sprang,
More fleet of foot or sure of fang.

Loudly have been sung the praises of many a gallant greyhound. Horne and Laelaps, Snowball, Maida and Bonny Heck, with the more modern heroes like Cerito and Master M'Grath, triple winners of the Waterloo Cup; but certainly never was hare immortalised except the Hare of Balchristy, hero of this amusing anecdote told by Scott:—

'There was a coursing club once upon a time, which met at Balchristy in the Province, or as it is popularly called, the Kingdom of Fife. The members were elderly social men, to whom a very moderate allowance of sport served as an introduction to a hearty dinner and jolly evening. Now, there had been sent on the ground where they usually met, a certain large stout hare, who seemed made on purpose to entertain these moderate sportsmen. She usually gave the amusement of three or four turns, as soon as she was put up—a sure sign of a strong hare, when practised by any beyond the age of a leveret: then stretched out in great style, and after affording the gentlemen an easy canter of a mile or two, threw out the dogs by passing through a particular gap in an enclosure. This sport the same hare gave to the same party for one or two seasons, and it was just enough to afford the worthy members of the club a sufficient reason to be alleged to their wives, or others whom it might concern, for passing the day in the public house. At length a fellow who attended the hunt, nefariously thrust his plaid into the gap I mentioned, and poor puss, her retreat being thus cut off, was, in the language of the dying Desdemona, "basely, basely murdered." The sport of the Balchristy Club seemed to end with this famous hare. They either found no hares, or such as afforded only a halloo and a squeak, or such, finally, as gave them farther runs than they had pleasure in following. The spirit of the meeting died away, and at length it was altogether given up.

'The publican was, of course, the party most especially affected by the discontinuance of the club, and regarded, it may be

supposed, with no complacency the person who had prevented the hare from escaping, and even his memory. One day, a gentleman asked him what was become of such a one, naming the obnoxious individual. "He is dead, sir," answered mine host, with an angry scowl, "and his soul kens this day whether the hare of Balchristy got fair play or not."

ROBERT MACGREGOR.

Three Wishes.

THREE little maidens out on the grass
 Had gambolled the hours away ;
 The summer was sweet, and the hours were fleet,—
 Gwendolen, Maud, and May.
 They had worked at their play the livelong day
 As hard as maidens can ;
 So when six little feet were tired with the heat,
 Then three little tongues began.

‘What *shall* we do next?’ cried the three, perplexed,
 ‘For we really must have more fun.’
 And they all thought deep, till a plan did leap
 Full-blown from the brain of one.
 ‘Let us ask of the Fairies’—’twas Maud that exclaimed—
 The tallest and fairest was she,—
 ‘Let us ask them to grant whatever we want
 And to list to wishes three!’

And what did they ask for? The youngest began,
 The sweet little maiden May ;
 The weakest was she, but her spirit was free
 And as gentle as the day ;
 ‘Oh, Fairy-Queen, whom I never have seen,
 I hope I address you aright—
 If you have one to spare, I should like to wear
 A dress of invisible white!’

Then the second one prayed for the Fairies’ aid,
 And a different wish had she ;
 Maud was her name, and she felt no shame,
 For she knew what her wish would be.
 Her limbs they were long, she was rosy and strong,
 Such a maid as men extol,
 Yet she begged for a prize that would shock the wise—
 ‘A wonderful Magic Doll!’

Now, you are the eldest, and what do *you* want,
Little Gwendolen, 'faithful and true ;'
With your face like a saint, and your manners so quaint,
Now what shall be done for you ?
'Oh, Fairies,' she said, 'let me cut off the head
Of a giant thatsup upon men ;
Let me grow strong and bold, like the heroes of old,
For now I am only ten !'

So the quick years flew, and the maidens grew,
And how do their wishes fare ?
Do the Fairies forget the childish debt,
Or reward the childish prayer ?
Oh, kind is the Queen of the Fays unseen !
And to Maud, a wedded bride,
She sent such a doll as mothers extol,
That toddled, and prattled, and cried !

Nor did Gwendolen miss her longed-for bliss,
A giant to conquer and slay ;
There are human needs, there are heroes' deeds,
For heroic hearts to-day.
But sweet little May, she vanished away
Beyond the Fairies' sight ;
So the angels gave what the maid did crave,
A robe of invisible white.

H. FRANCIS LESTER.

Ram Das of Cawnpore.

WE Germans do not spare trouble where literary or scientific work is on hand : and so when I was appointed by the University of Breslau to the travelling scholarship in the Neo-Sanskritic languages, I made up my mind at once to spend the next five years of my life in India. I knew already a good deal more Hindi and Urdu than most English officials who have spent twenty years in the country ; but I was anxious to perfect my knowledge by practice on the spot, and to acquire thorough proficiency in conversation by intercourse with the people themselves. I therefore went out to India at once, and avoiding the great towns, such as Calcutta or Allahabad, which have been largely anglicised by residents and soldiers, I took up my abode in the little village of Bithoor on the Ganges, a few miles from Cawnpore, celebrated as having been the residence of the Nana Sahib, whom you English always describe as 'the most ferocious rebel in the Mutiny.' Here I spent four years in daily intercourse with the native gentry, whose natural repugnance to foreigners I soon conquered by invariable respect for their feelings and prejudices. At the end of eighteen months I had so won my way to their hearts that the Muhammedans regarded me as scarcely outside the pale of Islam, while the Hindoos usually addressed me by the religious title of Bhai or brother.

Of course, however, the English officials did not look with any favouring eye upon my proceedings, especially as I sometimes felt called upon to remonstrate with them upon their hasty and often ignorant method of dispensing justice. This coolness towards the authorities increased the friendship felt towards me by the native population ; and 'the European Sahib who is not a Feringhee' became a general adviser of many among the poorer people in their legal difficulties. I merely mention these facts to account for the confidence reposed in me, of which the story I am about to relate is a striking example.

I had a syce or groom who passed by the name of Lal Biro. This man was a tall, reserved, white-haired old Hindoo, a Jat by caste, but with a figure which might have been taken for that of a Brahman. His manner to me was always cold and sometimes sullen ; and I found it difficult to place myself on the same terms with him as with my other servants. One dark evening, however,

during the cold season, I had driven back from Cawnpore with him late at night in a small open trap, and found him far more chatty and communicative than usual. When we reached the bungalow, we discovered that the lights were out, and the house almost shut up, as the servants had fancied that I meant to sleep at the club. Lal Biro accordingly came in with me, and helped me to get my supper ready. Then at my request he sat down cross-legged near the door and continued to give me some reminiscences of the Mutiny which had been interrupted by our arrival.

‘Yes, Sahib,’ he said quietly, composing himself on a little mat with a respectful inclination of the body; ‘I am Ram Das of Cawnpore.’

I was startled by the confession, for I knew the name of Ram Das as one of the most dangerous petty rebels, on whose head Government had fixed a large price; but I was gratified by the confidence he reposed in me, and I begged him to go on with his story. I write it down now in very nearly the literal English equivalent of his exact words.

‘Yes, Sahib, it is a long story truly. I will tell you how it all came about. I was a cultivator on the uplands there by Cawnpore, and I had a nice plot of land in Zameindari near the village there, good land with wheat and millet and a little tobacco. My millet was joar, and I got a rupee for eighteen seers, good money. I was well-to-do in those days. No man in the village but spoke well of Ram Das. I had a wife and three children, and a good mud cottage, and I paid my dues regularly to Mahadeo, oil and grain, most properly. The Brahmans said I was a most pious man, and everybody thought well of me.

‘One day Shaikh Ali, a Muhammadan, a landowner from over the river in Oude, whom I knew in the bazaar at Cawnpore, he met me near the bridge, resting. He said to me, “Well, Ram Das, these are strange things coming to pass. They say the sepoys have mutinied at Meerut, and the Feringhees are to be driven into the sea.”

‘I said, “That would not do us Hindoos much good. We should fall under you Musalmans again, and you would have an emperor at Delhi, and he would tax us and trouble us as our fathers tell us the Moguls did before the Feringhees came.”

‘Shaikh Ali said to me, “Are you a good man and true?”

‘I answered, “I pay my dues regularly and do poojah, but I don’t know what you, a Musalman, mean by a good man.”

“Can you keep counsel against the accursed Feringhees?” said he.

"That is an easy thing to do," I answered. "They tax us, and number us, and make our salt dear, and mean to take our daughters away from us, for which purpose they have made a census, to see how many young women there are of twelve years and upwards. Besides, they slaughter cows the same as you do."

"Listen to me, Ram Das," he said, "and keep your counsel. Do you know that they have tried to make all the sepoy's lose caste and become like dogs and Pariahs, by putting cow's grease on the cartridges?"

"I know it," I replied, "because my brother is a sepoy at Allahabad, and he sent me word of it by a son of our neighbour."

"Did we Musalmans ever do so?" he asked again.

"I never heard it," said I: "but indeed I am ignorant of all these things, for I am not an old man, and I have only heard imperfectly from my elders. Still, I don't know that you ever tried to make us lose caste."

"Well, Ram Das," said the Shaikh, "listen to what we propose. The sepoy's from Meerut have gone to Delhi and have proclaimed the King as Emperor. But now the Nana of Bithoor has something to say about it. If the Nana were made king, would you fight for him?"

"Certainly," said I, "for he is a Mahratta and a good Hindoo. He should by rights be Peshwa of the Mahrattas, and hold power even over your emperor at Delhi."

"That is quite true," the Shaikh answered. "The Peshwa was always the right hand and director of the Emperor. If we put the Mogul on the throne once more, the Nana would be his real sovereign, and Hindoos and Musalmans alike would rejoice in the change."

"But suppose we fall out among ourselves!"

"What does that matter in the end?" he answered. "Let us first drive out the accursed Feringhees, and then, if Allah prosper us, we may divide the land as we like between the two creeds. We are all sons of the soil, Hindoo and Musalman alike, and we can live together in peace. But these hateful Feringhees, they come across the sea, they overrun all India, they tax us all alike, they treat your Sindiah and Holkar as they treat our Nizam and our king of Oude, they take away our slaves, they tax our food, they pollute your sacred rivers, they destroy your castes, and as for us, they take their women to pic-nic in our mosques, as I have seen myself at Agra. Shall we not first drive them into the sea?"

"You say well," I answered, "and I shall ask more of this matter at Bithoor."

"That was the first that I heard of it all. Next day, the

village was all in commotion. It was said that the Nana had called on all good Hindoos to help him to clear out the Feringhees. I left my hut and my children, and I came to Bithoor here. Then they gave me a rifle, and told me I should march with them to Cawnpore to kill the Feringhees. There were not many of the dogs, and the gods were on our side; and when we had killed them all we should have the whole of India for the Hindoos, with no land-tax or salt-tax, and there should be no more cattle slaughtered nor no more interference with the pilgrims at Hurdwar. It was a grand day that, and the Nana, dressed out in all the Peshwa's jewels, looked like a very king.

‘Well, we went to Cawnpore and began to besiege the intrenchments which Wheeler Sahib had thrown up round the cantonment. We had great guns and many men, both sepoys and volunteers. Inside, the Feringhees had only a few, and not much artillery. We all thought that the gods had given us the Feringhees to slay, and that there would be no more of them left at all.

‘For twenty days we continued besieging, and the Feringhees got weaker and weaker. They had no food, and scarcely any water. At last Wheeler Sahib sent to tell the Nana that he would give himself up, if the Nana would spare their lives. The Nana was a merciful man, and he said, “I might go on and take the entrenchment, and kill you all if I wished; but to save time, because I want to get away and join the others, I will let you off.” So he took all the money in the treasury, and the guns, and promised to provide boats to take them all down to Allahabad.

‘I was standing about near one of our guns that day, when Chunder Lal, a Brahman in the Nana's troops, came up to me and said, “Well, Ram Das, what do you think of this?”

“‘I think,” said I, “that it is a sin and a shame, after we have broken down the hospital, and starved out the Feringhees, to let them go down the river to Allahabad, to strengthen the garrison that pollutes that holy city. For I hear that they do all kinds of wrong there, and insult the Brahmans, and the bathers, and the sacred fig-tree. And if these men go and join them, the garrison will be stronger, and they will be able to hold out longer against the people, which may the gods avert!’

“‘So I think too, Ram Das,” said he; “and for my part, I would try to prevent their going.”

‘A little later, we went down to the river, by the Nana's orders. There some men had got boats together, and were putting the Feringhees into them. It was getting dark, and we all went down to guard them. A few of them had got into the boats; the rest were on the bank. I can see it all now: the white men with

their proud looks abashed, going meekly into the boats, and the women stepping, all afraid and shrinking from the black faces—shrinking from us as if we were unclean and they would lose caste by touching us. Though they were so frightened, they were proud still. Then three guns went off somewhere in the camp. Chunder Lal was near me, and he said to me, "That is the signal for us to fire. The Nana ordered me to fire when I heard those guns." I don't know if it was true: perhaps the Nana ordered it, perhaps Chunder Lal told a lie: but I never could find out the truth about it, for they blew Chunder Lal from the guns at Cawnpore afterwards, and I have never seen the Nana since to ask him. At any rate, I levelled my musket and fired. I hit an officer Sahib, and wounded him, not mortally. In a moment there was a great report, and I looked round, and saw all our men firing. I don't know if they had the word of command, but I think not. I think they all saw me fire, and fired because I did, and because they thought it a shame to let the Feringhees escape; as though the head man of a village should entrap a tiger, a man-eater that had killed many cultivators in their dal-fields, and then should let it go. If a headman ordered the villagers to loose it from the trap, do you think they would obey him? No, and if he loosed it himself, they would take muskets and sticks and weapons of all kinds, and kill the man-eater at once. That is what we did with the Feringhees.

'It was a terrible sight, and I did not like to see it. Some of them leapt into the water and were drowned. Others swam away madly, like wild fowl, and we shot at them as they swam; and then they dived, and when they came up again, we fired at them again, and the water was red with their blood. I hit one man on the shoulder, and broke his arm, but still he swam on with his other arm, till somebody put a bullet through his head, and he sank. I ran into the water, as did many others, and we followed them down until all the swimmers were picked off. Some of the boats crossed the river: but there was a regiment waiting on the Oude shore—some said by accident, others that the Nana had posted it there—and the sepoys hacked them all to pieces as they tried to escape. It was a dreadful sight, and I am an older man now, and do not like to think of it: but I was younger then, and our blood was hot with fighting, and we thought we were going to drive the Feringhees out of the country, and that the gods would be well pleased with our day's work.

'Some boats got away a little way, but they were afterwards sent back. The women and children, some of them badly wounded, we took back into Cawnpore. We put them in the Bibi's house,

near the Assembly Rooms. Then in a few days, the others who were sent back from Futteypore arrived, and the Nana said, "What shall I do with them?" Everybody said, "Shoot them:" so we took out all the men the same day and shot them at once. The women and children the Nana spared, because he was a humane man; and he sent them to the others in the Bibi's house. There they were well treated; and though they had not punkahs, and tattis, and cow's flesh, as formerly, yet they got better rations than any of the Nana's own soldiers: for the Feringhees, like all you Europeans, Sahib, are very luxurious, and will not live off rice or dal and a little ghee like other people. You have conquered every place in the world, from Ceylon to Cashmere, and so you have got luxurious, and live off wheaten bread, and cow's flesh, and wine, and many such ungodly things. But the rest of the world think it a great thing if they have ghee to their rice.

'After a fortnight the Nana's troops were defeated at Futteypore, and it was said that the Feringhee ladies were sending letters to the army. Then the Nana was very angry. He said, "I have spared these women's lives, and yet they are sending news to my enemies. I will tell you what I will do: I will put them all to death." So he gave word to have them shot. I was one of the guards at the Bibi's house, and I got orders to shoot them. Then we all tried to bring them out in front of the house; but they would not come; so we had to go in and put an end to them there with swords and bayonets. Poor things! they shrieked piteously; and I was sorry for them, because they were some of them young and pretty, and it is not the women's fault if the Feringhees come here, for the Feringhee ladies hate India, and will all go away again across the water if they can get a chance. And then there were the children! One poor lady clung to my knees and begged hard for her daughter: but I had to obey orders, so I cut her down. It was very sad. But then, the Feringhee ladies are even prouder than the men, and they hate us Hindoos. They would not care if they killed a thousand of us if their little fingers ached. Look how they make us salaam, and punish us for small faults, and compel us to work punkahs, and to run on foot after their carriages, and insult our gods. Ah, they are a cruel, proud race. They are lower than the lowest Sudra, and yet they will treat a twice-born Brahman like a dog.

'We threw all the bodies into the well at Cawnpore where now they have put up an image of one of their gods—a cold, white god, with two wings—to avenge their death. Then there was great joy in Cawnpore. We had killed the last of the Feringhees, and India should be our own. Soon, we might make the Nana into a

real Peshwa, and turn against the Musalmans, and put down all slaughtering of cattle altogether, as the Rani did at Jhansi. We should have no more land-tax to pay, for the Musalmans should pay all the taxes, as is just : but the Hindoos should have their land for nothing, and live upon chupatties and ghee and honey every day. Ah, that was the grandest day that was ever seen in Cawnpore !

‘ But that was not the end of it. In the mysterious providence of the all-wise gods it was otherwise ordained. A few days before all this, I was standing about in the bazaar, when I met a jemadar. He said to me, “ So the Feringhees are marching from Allahabad ! ”

“ The Feringhees ! ” I said : “ why, no, we have killed them all off out of India, thanks be to the gods. At Delhi they are all killed, and at Meerut, and at Cawnpore here, and I believe everywhere but at Allahabad and at Calcutta. ’

“ Ram Das,” he answered, “ you are a child ; you know nothing. Do you think the Feringhees are so few ? They are swarming across the water like locusts across the Ganges. In a few months, they will all come from where they have been helping the Sultan of Roum against the other Christians, and they will make the whole Doab into a desert, as they made Rohilcund in the days of Hostein Sahib.¹ Shall I tell you the news from Delhi ? ”

“ Yes,” I said, “ tell me by all means, for I don’t believe the Feringhees will ever again hold rule in India, the land of the all-wise gods.” In those days, Sahib, I was very foolish. I did not know that the Feringhees were in number like the green parrots, and that they could send countless shiploads across the water as easily as we could send a cargo of dal down the river to Benares.

“ Well, then,” he said, “ Delhi has been besieged, and before long it will be taken. And the Feringhees have sent up men from Calcutta who have reached Allahabad, and are now on the march for Cawnpore. When they come, they will take us all, and kill the Nana, and there will be an end of the Hindoos for ever. They are going to make us all into Christians by force, baptising us with unclean water, and making Brahmans and Pariahs eat together of cow’s flesh, and destroying all caste, and modesty, and religion altogether.”

“ They will do all these things, doubtless,” I replied, “ if they can succeed in catching us : but it is impossible. The Feringhees are but a handful : they could never have ruled us if it were not for the sepoy. They had all the muskets and the ammunition, and they kept them from us. But now that the sepoy have mutinied, the Feringhees are but a few officers and half-a-dozen

¹ Warren Hastings.

regiments. And I cannot believe that the gods would allow men like them, who are worse than Musalmans, and have no caste, to conquer us who are the best blood in India, Brahmans, and Jats, and Mahrattas."

"But the jemadar laughed at me. "I tell you," he said, "this rebellion is all child's play. For I have myself been across the water once, as an officer's servant, and have been to England and to their great town, London. It is so great that a man can hardly walk across it from end to end in a day; and if you were to put Allahabad or Cawnpore down in its midst, the people would not know that any new thing had come about. They have ships in their rivers as thick as the canes in a sugar-field; and iron roads with cars drawn by steam horses. They have so many men that they could overrun all India as easily as the people of Cawnpore could overrun Bihtoor. And so when I hear their guns outside the town, I will run away to them, and I advise you to do so too."

"I didn't believe him at the time; but a few days afterwards, I found out that the Feringhees were really marching from Allahabad. And when we killed the ladies, they were almost at the door. They fought like demons, and we knew that the demons must all be on their side. Many times we went out to meet them, but in four separate battles they cut our men to pieces like sheep. At last, just after we had got rid of the ladies, they got to Cawnpore.

"Then there was no end of the confusion. The Nana got frightened, and fled away. We blew up the magazine, so that they might not have powder; and the Feringhees came at once into the town. There never were people so savage or angry. The sight of the well and the Bibi's house seemed to drive them wild. They were more like tigers than human beings. Every sepoy whom they caught they shot at once for vengeance, because that is their religion: and many who were not sepoys, and who had not borne arms against them, they shot on false evidence. Every man who had a grudge against another told the Feringhees that their enemy had helped to cut down the ladies; and the Feringhees were so greedy for blood that they believed it all, and shot them down at once. So much blood was never shed in Cawnpore: for one life they took ten. Then we knew it was all true what the jemadar had said, and that they would take the whole Doab back, and put back the land-tax, and the salt-tax; and we thought too that they would make us all into Christians; but *that* they have not done, for so long as they get their taxes and have high pay and good bungalows and cow's flesh and beer, they don't care about or reverence any religion, not even their

own. For we Hindoos respect our fakeers, and even the Musalmans respect their pirs; but the Feringhees think as little of the missionaries as we do ourselves, and care more for dances than for their churches. That is why they have not compelled us to become Christians.

‘All the time the Feringhees were in Cawnpore, I lay hid in the jemadar’s house. He was a good man, though he had gone over to the Feringhees as soon as they came in sight: and nobody suspected his house, because he was now on their side, and had given them news of all that took place in the town when we killed the officers and the ladies. So I was quite safe there, and got dal and water every day, and was in no danger at all.

‘Presently, the Feringhees moved off again, abandoning Cawnpore, because Havelock Sahib, who was the most terrible of their generals, wanted to go on to Lucknow. There the Musalmans of Oude had risen and were besieging the Presidency, with all the soldiers and officers. I would not go to Oude, because I did not care to fight for Musalmans, preferring rather to wait the chance of the Nana coming back; for only a Mahratta could now recover the kingdom for the Hindoos; and the Musalmans are almost as bad as the Feringhees themselves. In a short time, however, the Gwalior men came. They were good men, the Gwalior men: for though Sindiah, their rajah, had commanded them not to fight, they would not desert the other Hindoos, when there were Feringhees to be killed: and they disobeyed Sindiah, and rebelled, and so I joined them gladly. They pitched only fifteen miles from Cawnpore, and there I went out and enlisted with them.

‘By-and-by most of the Gwalior men got frightened, and went back again. Then things became very bad. A few of us marched southward, and hid in the jungles that slope down towards the Jumna. We were very frightened, because there are tigers in that jungle: and two Gwalior men were eaten by the tigers. But soon some Feringhees from Etawa heard of our being there, and they came out to stalk us. It was just like shooting *nil-ghae*. They came on horseback, and closed all round the jungle where we were. Then they crept on into the jungle, and we crept away from them. Every now and then they drove a man into an open space; and then they all shouted like fiends, and shot at him. When they hit him and rolled him over, they laughed, and shouted louder still. I was hidden under some low bushes; and two Feringhees passed close to me, one on each side of the bushes; but they did not see me. Soon after, they started a man who had been a sepoy, and he ran back towards my bushes. I never

said a word. Then they all fired at him, and killed him : but one bullet hit me on the arm, and went through the flesh of my arm, and partly splintered the bone. But still I said nothing. All day long I lay moaning to myself very low, and the Feringhees scoured all the jungle, and killed everybody but me, and went away saying to themselves that they had had a good day's sport. For they hunted us just as if we were antelopes.

'I lay for a fortnight, wounded, in the jungle, and had nothing to eat but Mahua berries. I was feverish and wandered in my mind : but at the end of a fortnight I could crawl out, and managed to drag along my wounded arm. Then I went to the nearest village, and gave out that I was a cultivator who had been wounded by the Gwalior men in trying to defend a *tuhseelie*¹ for the Feringhees. For that, they took great care of me, and sent me on to Cawnpore.

'I was not afraid to go back to the town, for my own people would not know me again. In that fortnight I had grown from a young man into the man you see me ; only I was older-looking then than I am now, for I have got younger in the Sahib's service. My hair had turned white, and so had my beard, which was longer and more matted than before. My forehead was wrinkled, and my cheeks had fallen away. As soon as I had got to Cawnpore, I went straight to the jemadar's house, to see if he would recognise me ; but he did not : for even my voice was hoarser and harsher than of old, through fever and exposure. So I went and told my story to the Feringhee doctor, how I had been wounded in keeping the *tuhseelie* for his people ; and he tended my arm, and made it well again. For though the Feringhees are savage like tigers to their enemies, if you befriend them, they will treat you well. In that they are better than the Musalmans.

Soon after, I went out to the parade ground, because I heard there was to be a dreadful sight. They were going to blow the rebels they had taken, from the guns. I went out and looked on. Then they took all the men, Brahmans and Chumars alike, and broke caste, and tied them each to a gun. I could not have done it, though I cut down the Feringhee ladies ; but they did it, and made a light matter of it. Then they fired the guns, and in a whiff their bodies were all blown away utterly, so that there was nothing left of them. This they did so as utterly to destroy the rebels, leaving neither body nor soul, but annihilating them altogether, which is worse than death. They would have done it to me, if they had caught me. Do you wonder that I hate the Feringhees, Sahib ? Why, they did it even to the twice-born Brahmans, let alone a Jat. The gods will avenge it on them.

¹ Village Treasury.

‘Then I went out to look at my plot of land. The Feringhees knew of me from many traitors, some of whom had given up my name to save themselves from being blown away—and no wonder. They had seized my plot, and sold it to another man, a zameendar, a Kayath in Cawnpore, who had made money by supplying them with food—the curse of all the gods upon him! And as for my wife and children, they had gone wandering out, and I have never seen them since. My wife was with child, and she went into Cawnpore, and thence elsewhere, I know not where, and starved to death, I suppose, or died in some other shameful way. But one of my daughters a missionary got, and sent her to Meerut to a school; and there they are teaching her to be a Christian, and to hate her own gods and her own people, and to love the Feringhees who suck the blood of India, and grind down the poor with taxes, and dispossess the Thakurs, who ought, of course, by right to own the land. This much I learned by enquiring at Cawnpore; but how my wife died, or whether they killed her, or what, that I have never been able to learn.

‘So that was the end of it all. The Nana was hidden away somewhere up Nepaul way; and the Feringhees had got back Lucknow; and all over the Doab and the Punjab they were established again, and the hopes of the people were all broken. And I had lost my land, and my wife, and my children, and had nothing to live upon or to live for. And we had not driven out the accursed strangers, after all, but on the contrary they made themselves stronger than ever, and sent more soldiers, as the jemadar had prophesied, and put down the Company, who used to be their rajah, and set up a Maharani instead, who is now Empress of India. And they made new taxes and a new census and all sorts of imposts. But since that time they have been more afraid of us, and are not so insolent to the temples, or the pilgrims, or to the sacred monkeys. And I came to Bithoor, and became a syce, and I have been a syce ever since. That is all I know about the Mutiny, Sahib.’

The old man stopped suddenly, having told all his story in a dull, monotonous voice, with little feeling and no dramatic display. I have tried to reproduce it just as he said it. There was no passion, no fierceness, no cruelty in his manner; but simply a deep, settled, uniform tone of hatred to the English. It was the only time I had ever heard the story of the Mutiny from a native point of view, and I give it as I heard it, without mitigating aught either of its horror or its truth.

‘And you are not afraid of telling me all this?’ I asked.

He shook his head. 'The Sahib has a white face,' he answered, 'but his heart is black.'

'And the Nana?' I enquired. 'Do you know if he is living still?'

His eyes flashed fire for the first time since he had begun. 'Ay,' he cried; 'he *is* living. That I know from many trusty friends. And he will come again whenever there is trouble between the Feringhees and the other Christians: and then we shall have no quarrelling among ourselves; but Sindiah, and Holkar, and the Nizam, and the Oude people, and even the Bengalis will rise up together; and we will cut every Feringhee's throat in all India, and the gods will give us the land for ever after. . . . Good night, Sahib: my salaam to you.' And he glided like a serpent from the room.

J. ARBUTHNOT WILSON.

The Leaden Casket.

BY MRS. ALFRED W. HUNT.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Ros. O, how full of briars is this working-day world !

As You Like It.

WHAT would become of all the Exhibitions which contribute to make the month of May such a pleasure and such a toil, if artists still adhered to the pious old custom of steeping their brushes in holy water all through Lent? Lent is the very busiest season of the artistic year; and if the painters' faces are pale, it is not with fasting, but with hard work; or if they do fast, it is because they can barely spare time to snatch a mouthful of food. Those who are familiar with the secret history of many of the most admired pictures can tell of the hairbreadth escapes from total ruin they have more than once undergone: how, on the very last day before 'sending in,' Brown painted out the face of his principal figure—the agonised heroine of the last new heartrending farewell scene—and how he had to sit up the whole night to put her in again, with deeper throes of anguish, and a better-painted complexion; while Jones performed the friendly office of dabbing in a background for him; and Thompson tore the picture from them at the last, and carried it down to Burlington House on the top of a common street-cab, just in time for the final skirmish of porters.

All over London, men were toiling and half-killing themselves thus with excitement as the fatal day for 'sending in' drew nearer. Morrison was as busy and as anxious as the rest. The winter had been dark and foggy, and his mind had been too unsettled for work. He was trying to finish his big picture and another from Rastwick Nab, and for once was grateful when Ambergreen, who always had plenty of time at his disposal, came idly in with ample leisure to criticise. He laughed at Morrison's nervousness and said, 'I never get into such a state about my pictures as you seem to do—not a bit of it. When I have finished a thing, it is finished, and I put it on one side and trouble myself no more about it.'

'But my things never do seem quite right, and I can't help working at them so long as I see I can make them better.'

'More's the pity, both for them and you. What a fortune you might make, Morrison, if you would but learn to let well alone, and if you would but addict yourself entirely to sunsets! No one can touch you when it comes to putting a fine sunset on the canvas. I can't think how you contrive to do it. It's not as if you were a poetical fellow.'

Morrison declined this provocation to an argument, and said meekly, 'I don't think I do do it. How I wish the splendid picture one wants to paint would let itself be done! I sometimes feel as if at length I was going to do something a little more like the thing I am trying for than usual, and then nothing comes of it. That way a picture has of turning out, at the last, just like every other picture, is one of the cruellest things in art.'

'Nonsense! You are no judge of your own work. Besides, after all, look how you are getting on! No young fellow of my acquaintance is half so well thought of. Why, whose work is this?' And as Ambergreen spoke he took up a little drawing of the harbour at St. Hilda's, by Rosamond Keithley—the very picture she was painting when Morrison first saw her.

'Oh, that's a lady's work. What do you think of it? Tell me, and then I will tell you something.'

'That you are engaged to her, I suppose?' said Ambergreen coolly, not for one moment imagining that there could be a word of truth in his assertion, for he looked on getting married as throwing away every prospect of advancement, worldly and intellectual, and could not believe that his friend would be so foolish. 'She can draw,' said Ambergreen.

'Yes, and I am engaged to her. If you wait a little longer you will see her. She is coming here to try to finish that for the Ellesmere. I have persuaded her to send in.'

'There is some very good work in it. But I would not marry her if I were you. I should always imagine her intentions were not honourable. I mean, she is probably much more fond of painting than of anything else, and is only marrying you because you can help her to get on. That's it, you may be sure. You smile as if you felt quite safe, but you may depend on it that is her reason. I wish you would not marry her—I hate my friends marrying; and now there's you, and Miss Brooke, and Mr. Ardrossan—three of you—at one go!'

'Miss Brooke? Is she going to be married? But to whom?'

'To Mr. Ardrossan, of course; so there's no more picture-buying to be looked for from him. I should not have minded marrying Miss Brooke myself; that is, if ever I could bring myself to marry anybody. I used to think she did rather like me; but then, you

see, that aunt looked such a dragon that I never dared to flirt at all.'

'Is she really going to marry Mr. Ardrossan?' inquired Morrison.

'Yes, really—at least, I am told so. I wish she was not, don't you? Good-bye. Be happy about your pictures. They are sure to be great successes. I never saw such a lucky young fellow as you are. Everything goes right with you. You will pass through life without knowing what disappointment is! At least, it looks like it. Good-bye again.'

Morrison turned aside to hide his face, which, as he well knew, wore an expression somewhat at variance with this statement. The pang he felt on hearing Ambergreen's news was not long-lived. He was not quite cured of his love for Olive—he wondered sometimes whether he ever should be—but he had a very sincere affection for Rose Keithley, and in half an hour she and her aunt, Mrs. Ullathorne, would be with him.

Dr. Ullathorne, at the East-end, had a very comfortable house, but there was scarcely a room in it which he could call his own. All day long it was besieged by people who 'just wanted to speak to him for five minutes.' It was astounding how many there were in his parish who were in need of money and advice, and time to state their wishes; and each person's necessity was still more pressing than that of the one who had gone before him. One room, easy of access from the door, was set apart for these visitors, but it frequently overflowed all over the house, and no room could be pronounced absolutely safe from intrusion, not even a poor shabby little old nursery where Rosamond Keithley, now on a visit to the good Rector of St. Dionysius, had of late set up her easel, in the vain hope of quiet. Morrison had seen her futile attempts to secure a corner to work in, and had invited her to come and paint in his studio; and while Ambergreen was talking to him she was on her way there. To-day her companion was not Mrs. Ullathorne, but Miss Lettice Brooke, who had come from Austerfield to pay a visit in Sussex, and was spending a week in Kensington Square to break the journey. Poor lady, old as she was, she found her sister Mary still treated her as a baby, and was not sorry when the Bethnal-Green Ullathornes made her go there for a couple of days. This morning she was in a flutter of excitement at being asked to go with Rose Keithley to Mr. Morrison's studio. 'You are sure it is right?' she asked. 'I want to go, of course, but I don't want to do anything very wrong.'

'How can it be very wrong? It is not wrong at all.'

'Well, my dear, you know him, and I will do as you like, but

they do tell such stories of artists and their goings-on. They are most of them very wicked, I fancy; but I'll go if you wish it. You say you want Mr. Morrison's advice about your picture. It does seem so funny to think of his growing up to be an authority on any subject! I remember him quite a little boy, with no sense whatever, except what my niece Olive put into his head.'

'That must have been a very long time ago,' cried Rosamond, full of dutiful respect for her lover's intellect.

'Well, it was. I don't know that he was stupider than other boys—they are all stupid—but still I do think he was a particularly dull boy. Not that I ever said much to him.'

'Then how do you know he was so dull?' said Rose, much piqued. But Miss Lettice was quite unaware that she was saying anything wrong.

'I'm sure I don't know how I do know, my memory is so bad, but I am certain he was dull.'

Rose laughed merrily, and said, 'At any rate, he is not dull now. He is so clever and interesting. He will like to see you. He has talked to me about Austerfield.'

'I can't think what he finds to admire in the place, or what Olive does either—I expect they liked it because they had all their own way when they were there.'

'He has never mentioned your niece Olive to me,' said Rose. 'Was he much at your house?'

'At *our* house!' gasped Miss Lettice, who, being country-bred, was a great stickler for the due observance of divinely-appointed divisions of classes. 'No, he never entered *our* doors; but he was a good-looking, well-behaved little fellow, and somehow or other Olive and he were always together.'

'How old were they then?' asked Rosamond, with one faint tremor of uneasiness.

'Oh, babies; children, at any rate. It is years ago now. I don't suppose he even remembers her name. She thinks he does, but I dare say he has forgotten he ever even saw her.'

'Here we are!' said Rosamond.

Miss Lettice puckered up her lips in surprise. She had not expected to find Mr. Morrison in such good quarters. In her estimation, the tasteless decorations with which the architect had enlivened the exterior of the house denoted circumstances of ease, if not of splendour.

'I won't tell him your name. Let us see if he remembers you.'

'I bring with me an old acquaintance of yours,' said Rose, who had not the slightest conception of the heights from which Miss

Lettice had looked down on 'Willie,' together with all the other 'village people.' 'Can you guess who it is?'

Morrison looked at the handsome old lady, who, dressed in her pretty maidenly greys, now stood smiling so benevolently on him. 'Of course I can,' he cried warmly. 'Do you think I could ever forget an Austerfield face? It is Miss Lettice Brooke.'

'You really remember me! You have not seen me for nearly a dozen years!' cried Miss Lettice; and then, tactless as usual, she exclaimed, 'My dear Rosamond, if I were you I should be jealous of these very vivid recollections of Mr. Morrison's. My niece Olive is just the same. Whenever she sees me she quite tears me down with questions about a hundred different things at Austerfield that I have no interest in.'

Morrison looked up eagerly. Miss Lettice continued: 'Now, in reality it is as poor a place as you could wish to see. There's not a decent house in the whole village, except our own and the clergyman's—all the rest are mere shabby little cottages.'

Rose Keithley, who knew that Morrison had lived there, and that his origin had been rather humble, blushed deeply at this, and looked pleadingly at Miss Lettice, who ran on with great composure and velocity for some minutes longer in the same strain.

'We must not talk,' interposed Rosamond, taking off her bonnet and retreating to a distant table. 'I am only allowed to come here on condition that I don't speak.' 'That's what I call a particularly plain hint,' thought she: 'almost too plain.'

But Miss Lettice only said, 'Quite right. Of course work must be paramount here, and I am not much of a talker.'

'Will you have a book, Miss Lettice?' said Rose, full of pity for Morrison. 'Do let me get you a book.'

'Yes, you may give me a book, but I am not much of a reader. You see, I forget what I have read ten minutes after I have shut the book; so what's the use of my reading? No, I'll sit here and think. I won't speak, Mr. Morrison. Don't be afraid; I quite know the importance of silence.' There was a second's pause, and then she added, 'You see, I sometimes stay with my sister-in-law in Harley Street, and when I am there she occasionally as a great favour lets me sit with her in her study when she is writing, and that makes me know so well how important it is to be absolutely quiet and silent when in the company of anyone who is doing head-work. She is dreadfully particular—she won't be disturbed. When you are with her you must not move or speak, or read a newspaper, or do almost anything. You see it won't do to be noisy, for she is thinking hard all the time. I am sure it is very good of

her to sit working away so patiently for so many hours, all for the sake of writing books that one forgets ten minutes after one has read them. Now, isn't it, Mr. Morrison, very good ?'

He made a civil speech, and she responded by another ; after which, having been silent for five minutes, she said, 'I think you have been at Austerfield lately, Mr. Morrison ?'

'Yes, I went over from St. Hilda's—I had a fancy to see the old place again.'

'I heard you had been there. It was so odd, too : I went to see my brother in Harley Street the other day—just to spend the day, you know, for my real visit there is to be paid when I return from Sussex—that will be in about three weeks' time, for I go there to-morrow, and am to stay three weeks. Well, I went to my brother Richard's house, and I found my niece Miss Olive very ill—altogether ill, and out of spirits. I don't know what had happened to her, or whether anything had happened, but she looked pale and thin and unhappy, and was sitting in her own room painting a few twigs of some bush or other—ugly things they were, I assure you, Mr. Morrison—and I said to her, "Olive, why don't you get some pretty flowers or fruit or something from Covent Garden to copy ? What's the use of wasting your time over such common rubbish as that, when Covent Garden is so near ?" And she said, "Don't be so disrespectful to flowers from your own native place ;" and I cried out, "My own native place ! How did they come here ?" And she asked me if I had heard of your being there, and said she was sure you had been, for some one had sent her a whole hamperfull of wild flowers, and she felt certain that it could have been no one but you ; so I said you had been there, for, you see, just by accident I had heard of your sleeping one night at "The Four Alls," and that made me able to tell her ; and you can't think how delighted she looked when she found she had guessed right.'

Morrison bent his head down over his picture. He did not answer this long speech. He dared not speak—he scarcely dared to think. Rose glanced at him, wondering whether Miss Lettice's talk was irritating him beyond endurance, or whether his emotion was caused by something else. What could it mean ?

Miss Lettice did not notice anything—not even that no one had replied to her speech. Rose saw her beginning to speak again, and trembled. It was terrible that Morrison should be so disturbed when each moment was so precious ! She would go—she wished she had not come—it was too cruel that he should be thus tormented by Miss Lettice on the very eve of 'sending in.'

'You have not seen my niece, I think, since you were both children ?' persisted the unconscious Miss Lettice. She thought

she was behaving like a kind Christian gentlewoman by being so ready to meet Morrison on terms of equality, and talk so freely to him.

'Oh, yes, I have; I saw her in Scotland in October, and I met her at a party in Harley Street on the 6th of February.'

'Dear me!' exclaimed Miss Lettice, 'what a memory you have for dates! I wish I had, I am sure. Can you remember the dates of your parties as well as that, Rose?'

Rose Keithley started and did some injury to her drawing, for the 6th of February was the evening which Morrison had promised to spend in her company, and he had broken that engagement, apparently, for the sake of seeing Miss Olive Brooke. 'What have I done?' she cried, noticing that she had dropped a brushfull of colour on a delicate part of her sky.

'Take care, Rose,' said Morrison, who was quick to hear her low cry of distress and go to the rescue. 'Be cautious how you work, dear; you have no time now for anything but very careful finishing touches.' His voice was so kind and his offered assistance so prompt, that his Rose took heart again and looked lovingly in his face.

'Don't forget my song,' cried he. His song was a wicked parody on a very pretty poem of George Macdonald's:—

Alas! how easily things go wrong!
A touch too much, or a tint too strong,
And there follows a mess and no end of pain,
And the drawing is never the same again!

He soon repaired the damage and went back to his work, but Rose found herself thinking of the real last line of this verse, 'And life is never the same again!' She could not drive it out of her mind. Suppose one of those little things which make all go wrong so easily, had happened now?

Miss Lettice did not leave her much time for thought—she very soon exclaimed, 'Mr. Morrison, I wonder you do not go often to my sister-in-law's Tuesday evening parties; she is fond of artists and authors, and would be delighted to see you.'

'Thank you, I go out so little,' he replied, and again became thoughtful, for she had reminded him of his last Tuesday evening in Harley Street. Finding everyone so unsociable, Miss Lettice began to read, and was actually silent for nearly an hour. Morrison painted, but his mind was in a turmoil. Miss Lettice's stray words stirred up so many thoughts of all kinds. Ambergreen said Olive was engaged to Mr. Ardrossan! Miss Lettice said she was eager for news of Austerfield and delighted with his

flowers. Did she care for him a little? She could scarcely think of Austerfield without thinking of him at the same time. She certainly thought of Austerfield. But what did it signify what her thoughts were, when she was engaged to Mr. Ardrossan and he to Rosamond Keithley? But was she engaged to Mr. Ardrossan? He turned to Miss Lettice and said, 'I hear that Miss Olive Brooke is engaged to Mr. Ardrossan—I hope I do not take a liberty in speaking of it, and congratulating you.'

'Engaged to Mr. Ardrossan—indeed she is not!' cried Miss Lettice, who considered Olive nearly twenty years too young to think of marrying. 'I am certain she is not. I should have been informed of it if she were.'

Morrison drew a long breath of relief, and then his eye fell on Rosamond Keithley's dutiful head, which was bent down over her work. He saw, by a tinge of deeper colour in her cheek than was usual, that she was either anxious about what she was doing or something else, and hastily went to her side and whispered, 'Is there anything I can do for you, dear? Don't forget that I take quite as much interest in your work now as in my own.'

On this she looked so happy that he could not but be happy too.

'Remember me kindly to Miss Olive Brooke when you see her,' said he, when he bade Miss Lettice good-bye.

'Oh, but I am afraid I shall not see her until I return from Sussex.'

'Then when you write to her, perhaps.'

'I am not much of a writer,' said she. 'I don't suppose I shall have any opportunity of giving your message for three weeks—you know I stay three weeks in Sussex—I told you.'

'Yes, I know, but my message is of no consequence whatever.'

CHAPTER XL.

We lose a life in every friend we lose,
And every death is painful but the last.—LANDOR.

It was a dull and dismal afternoon. The air was laden with moisture, which fell in almost imperceptibly fine rain. The streets were muddy and wretched-looking. Olive was in her room dressing to go to her mother's funeral. Much as she dreaded the pain of witnessing such a ceremony, it would have hurt her still more to stay away. Her heart swelled when she thought how small would be the number of those who would care to be present. Her mother had expressed a wish that she should wear no mourning,

but on this one day she felt she must put on a black dress. Dr. Brooke was to be there, and Alice, and, as Olive believed, no one else; but when she went downstairs her aunt came forward and said, 'Dear child, I am going with you.' This mark of kindness touched Olive deeply—there was sacrifice as well as love in it.

'Your aunt Alice will go with us,' said Dr. Brooke. 'We must call for her.'

'How beautiful she is!' whispered Mrs. Brooke when she saw Alice Ainsley slowly walking down the narrow strip of garden. 'She has just the most beautiful kind of face a woman can have. Don't you think so, Richard?'

'I don't know, I am sure, dear,' said he absently.

Arrived at the Cemetery, the scanty band of mourners arranged themselves and followed the coffin to the grave. Olive felt in a waking dream. She kept repeating to herself her mother's words as transmitted by Alice: 'Tell my dear Olive not to grieve over my death. Make her understand how I long for rest. Tell her that I shall perhaps be more with her now than I have ever been before, and that she must not pain me by the sight of any sorrow.' Olive felt as if she were under an obligation to shed no tears and think no repining thoughts. She had brought with her all her Austerfield primroses—they were fresh and bright as ever. She liked the idea of placing these, which to her mind were the most precious flowers she could procure, in her mother's grave. When the service was over she had them laid on the coffin, and then she caught hold of her uncle's arm and said, 'Now, take me away.' But just as he was leading her away, she turned and saw Alice Ainsley standing gazing into the grave with a look in her face which plainly revealed that she was feeling that she had nothing left to live for. Ever since her girlhood Alice had lived for one object only. She had entirely devoted herself to the care of the sister who during all this time had been so dependent on her, but who now needed no more help from anyone. Whither was she now to turn? Who needed her love or care? Where was she to look for companionship? Olive saw the sense of desolation which was overmastering her, and stole gently to her side, slipped her hand in hers, and said, 'Aunt Alice, love me a little, and let me be with you sometimes. May I go home with you to-day?'

A pleased smile broke over Alice's face; she kept Olive's hand in hers, and they all left the Cemetery. Silently they seated themselves in the carriage, and now with one consent all the party looked at Alice as the one who most needed pity. She was quite unaware of their gaze. She sat looking out of the window and very full of thought. Just as they were approaching the house where

she was living she turned to the Doctor and exclaimed, 'Richard—I beg your pardon—Dr. Brooke, how very pale you are!'

'It is nothing,' said Mrs. Brooke. 'He is a little tired. He often looks like that now—he has not quite recovered his long illness.'

'You have been ill?' said Alice—the deepest concern overspread her face, and for the first time she looked at him with undivided attention.

'Oh, no, I am quite well,' said he. He disliked to have anything said about his health.

'Pray take care of yourself,' said Alice earnestly, and then no more was said until the carriage stopped at her door.

'Olive says she will stay with me till the evening,' said she. 'It is very kind of her. I have a great many things to arrange, and she will help me. I hardly know what to do with myself—I think I shall go abroad.'

Dr. Brooke seemed uneasy, and said, 'Whatever you decide on, Alice, I hope you understand that you have friends in Harley Street who will be glad to be of service to you.'

'Yes, do understand that, dear,' cried Mrs. Brooke, with a warmth which surprised her husband. 'I will come to see you in the morning—if I may?'

'In the morning!' His wife, who was so tenacious of her time during the morning, was offering to pay this early visit! Dr. Brooke looked at Selina in amazement. She was now saying to Alice, 'Do not make any very decided arrangements about the future until I have seen you—please do not, for I have something to propose to you.'

'She surely does not imagine that Alice is very poor, and want to engage her as amanuensis?' thought he.

He was still more surprised in the evening, for Selina was dressed for dinner and in the drawing-room even before the gong sounded. Such a thing had not happened for years. A smile passed over his face when he saw her, but it was not so much in commendation of her punctuality as because something in her manner pleased him so much. He could not help thinking of the time when he first knew her—when she was a girl in her own home—and all through dinner he was struck by her gentle thoughtfulness.

After tea he usually depended on an easy-chair and an amusing book for the comfort of his evening, for though Mrs. Brooke's day's work was nominally ended at seven, she invariably stole away to dwell in fond criticism on the inky pages produced in the morning. This evening he established himself in a corner as usual; but happening after a while to look up, he was surprised to find he was

not alone—his wife was sitting staring into the fire with folded hands and very earnest eyes. ‘I thought you had gone off to your work,’ said he.

‘I am never going to write again,’ she replied sadly.

‘Oh, poor wife, you have had a bad review! Don’t let that vex you too much.’

She shook her head. ‘It’s a great deal worse than that. In fact, the reviews one gives oneself always are worse than those one gets from other people. Richard, I have been a very bad wife to you.’

‘My dear Selina, no. I can’t let you say that.’

‘Yes, I have, and you have been so good and kind and patient! I am ashamed to think of it.’

‘Think of what? What can you mean?’

‘Of your forbearance—of how I must have tried you.’

‘What can make you talk in this way, Selina? I am not making any complaint. It is the very last thing I had it in my mind to do to-night.’

‘But I am making a complaint against myself. I seem all at once to see how much you have had to bear, Richard. I have tried you to the uttermost, I know, and under the circumstances I can’t imagine how you have borne it so well.’

‘My dear Selina, you are distressing yourself without a cause. What can you be thinking of? “Under the circumstances”—under what circumstances?’ And the Doctor looked as he felt—honestly puzzled.

‘I’ll tell you what I mean. Perhaps the only good you have ever got from my writing novels has come to you to-day. My novel-writing has made me understand something which I should never have understood without it. Richard, I was not your first love; I thought I was—until this morning. Your first love was Alice Ainsley. Don’t interrupt me. Let me tell you the story as I imagine it—you shall tell me if I am right. Richard, my dear husband, if I did not love you with all my heart—if I did not know you loved me, and feel grateful to you for doing so, and trust in you entirely, I could not speak to you as I am doing now.’

They were now sitting side by side. He took her hand in his and waited to hear what she wished to say. ‘Richard, dear, I saw it all this morning. Chesterfield married Dorothy Ainsley—you were engaged to Alice. If Dorothy was as beautiful and noble-looking a woman as Alice is, it must have been hard to find two such sisters anywhere. Chesterfield’s trouble brought on your trouble—that’s how I imagine it all—and when he divorced his

poor wife, your engagement with Alice was broken off too. I see it all. She would not marry into a family which had treated her sister so ill—or she wished to devote herself to her, or you did not uphold Dorothy's innocence heartily enough—there are so many ways in which it might have happened. It is painful to think of it, but have I not guessed the truth ?'

'Yes,' said he, 'you have. Alice and I were to have been married. No time was fixed, for I had my way to make, but we were engaged, and then that miserable trial came, and everything was at an end between us.'

'I can't think how you could ever care for me after having been engaged to Alice. You did love me, I think, but she is so superior—she is one in a thousand.'

'So are you. I loved her most truly ; but, Selina, I loved you too, and, dear, need I say that I love you still ?'

Mrs. Brooke had never been so happy in her life. 'In spite of all I have done to make you unhap—no, uncomfortable ?'

'What is that ? Of course I love you. I may sometimes have wished you would give more of your time to your house and children, but I have never ceased to feel that you were a high-minded noble woman. There is no smallness of mind in you, Selina.'

'I hope not,' replied Mrs. Brooke humbly. She was afraid she did not quite deserve this high praise.

'I am sure of it. To-day in the Cemetery you somehow or other guessed that there had been a time when poor Alice Ainsley was more to me than anyone else in the world, and you at once became doubly kind to her.'

'How could I be otherwise ? I felt she was a thousand times more worthy of you than I. I looked at you both, and thought how you must have suffered. I was ashamed when I saw how little I had done to make you happy with me. Richard, I will never write another page. We will have the children home—it is time they left school. Let us have them with us and be happy together.'

'We will have them back,' said Dr. Brooke ; 'but as to your giving up your writing, I exact no such sacrifice. Do it at stated times ; don't give it up altogether.'

'We will think about that—you know I am not one of those who think that the half is better than the whole. Besides, I want to please you.'

'To please me, dear ? Don't class me with those who maintain that a woman ought to have no higher ambition than to make her husband comfortable.'

'Oh, no!' cried Mrs. Brooke; and then she bethought herself and added, 'At least, I don't know—perhaps I ought to say that that was just what I did imagine you always felt ought to be the object of my life.'

'My dear wife, you have lived with me all these years, and don't know me better than that! No one likes to see women take a high place in the world better than I do, but not at the expense of plain duties. People must be faithful over the little things which are committed to their charge before they even attempt to meddle with great ones.'

'But I always hoped to earn so much money by writing that I could pay for having everything done for you in a way far superior to anything I could have done. And after all I have never made any money worth mentioning. I suppose the fact is my books are not clever.' And the poor lady sighed. 'Well,' she added, 'you have been very good to me, Richard, and I am going to write no more—that is, unless this present book is so successful that it really looks as if I ought to go on. There is the bell. It is Olive. Let us finish this conversation before she comes. Richard, I want to ask you if I may invite Alice Ainsley to come and stay with us—live with us, if she likes—she is terribly alone?'

'You are too good, Selina. Do as you think best.'

The bell did not announce Olive's arrival, but that of a letter for Dr. Brooke. He read it with a curious smile on his face, then without speaking thrust it into his pocket—he had not the heart to tell his wife its contents that night, but perhaps it is not quite fair to withhold them from our readers. It was a note from Mrs. Ullathorne, and began thus:—

RICHARD BROOKE,—I have to-day read your wife's novel. You may tell her so, and that I recognise my own portrait, and am extremely grateful to her for the pains which she has bestowed on it. You may also inform her that before I went abroad last year I made my will, and as you and she have never worried me with your attentions, I left 20,000*l.* to you, the same sum to her, and 10,000*l.* to each of your children; but as I find you have a wife so richly endowed with genius that she will have no difficulty in providing for your family without any assistance from me, I have burnt that will, and shall make a new one to-morrow morning, in which this very unnecessary bequest will not appear.

MARY ULLATHORNE.

'Does that letter vex you in any way, dear?' inquired Mrs. Brooke, when she saw that her husband had suddenly become rather silent.

'Yes—no. It would have vexed me terribly if we had not had this talk together. I defy anything to vex me now.'

CHAPTER XLI.

Thus do all traitors ;
 If their purgation did consist in words,
 They are as innocent as grace itself :
 Let it suffice thee that I trust thee not.

As You Like It.

How was the so-called Lady Brooke to be treated ? This was the question which the Brookes of Harley Street lost no time in putting to themselves after the real Lady Brooke's death, and the disclosures which had preceded it. Dr. Brooke had a burning desire to introduce her to the notice of the nearest policeman ; but being reminded that that was incompatible with letting her go her way in peace, he declared that he would never see or speak to her again. But, after all, his part was an easy one to play, for she had no wish whatever to see him or to speak to him, and never did either when it was possible to avoid it. Mrs. Brooke felt an equal repugnance to her ; and as for Olive, she loathed the very thought of her. At the same time, all three considered themselves bound to let her depart quietly—that is, without any open scandal.

Two days after Olive's flight from Welbeck Street Lady Brooke called in Harley Street, and was told that the whole family was out. This she did not believe, and was furious at being denied admittance. On this particular day she had not meant to stay long with Olive ; she had others to see as well as her undutiful stepdaughter, and more crops of dragons' teeth to sow than one. Being turned away from Dr. Brooke's door, she stopped a cab and began her rounds by paying a visit to Mrs. Ullathorne.

'Mary,' said she, 'you have been kinder to me than any of Chesterfield's sisters—I shall always be grateful to you. I wish you would come out to India. The climate would suit you admirably, if you only stayed six months or so.'

Mrs. Ullathorne shook her head. 'I don't expect to be long here. I have much to do and to think of—my house must be set in order.'

'Oh, I am so sorry if anything is wrong,' cried Lady Brooke, who was not conversant with phraseology of this kind. 'It is Olive's fault if there is ; she said she would look after everything.'

Mrs. Ullathorne growled, but did not condescend to explain. Lady Brooke continued : 'Mary, what do you think of Selina's encouraging Olive to set me at defiance ?'

'She is a novel-writing nuisance !'

'She does not seem to care for the feelings of any of her

relations. Have you seen her last novel? They say it is rather better than usual.'

'Bah! I know the sort of thing it will be. In one of Dr. Johnson's reviews he says of some book or other, "A man might write reams of such stuff, if he would only abandon his mind to it," and he would have said the same of Selina's rubbish.'

'Then you have not read it?' persisted Lady Brooke, who found it harder than she expected to stir up Mrs. Ullathorne to the desired point of interest.

'I—oh dear, no; I certainly have not read it,' replied that lady gruffly. She was one of those persons who think that they settle the claims of any book by saying, 'I have not read it.' 'In fact, I read no novels. I leave that to poor empty-headed Sister Lettice—she is never without a novel in her hands. But why do you go on asking me if I have read it? Is there anything in it I ought to see? Has she been putting us all in it?'

'They say so. I have not read it myself, but I have got it here, and soon shall,' said Lady Brooke, tapping the first volume of 'Cross-and-Fifty,' of which she had devoured every word. 'I expect to find a portrait of myself in it when I do.'

'It's of no consequence what she does; she is welcome to put me into every book she writes, if she chooses. I am sure I shall never trouble myself to read any of them.'

'Oh, she wouldn't put you in—she wouldn't take such a liberty.'

'I feel quite indifferent,' replied Mrs. Ullathorne, whose curiosity was now piqued to the uttermost. 'People must describe somebody. I dare say my character will do as well for her as another.'

Lady Brooke chatted a while longer and then left, but she purposely forgot to take with her the first volume of 'Cross-and-Fifty,' and she had not been gone five minutes before Mrs. Ullathorne discovered it and began to read it with all the spectacle-power at her command. Lady Brooke then went to Mrs. Raymond's. 'I have come to have a little talk with you, Esther,' said she. 'Olive has left my lodgings and gone to Harley Street. I don't know why. Don't you think that Richard and Selina are behaving very ill?'

'They are odd people,' replied Mrs. Raymond, shrugging her shoulders.

'I must see Olive before I leave England—about the Filoselle business, you know; but if they won't let me do so, will you undertake to talk to her about it? The woman has been asking rather disagreeable questions—she is not so civil as she ought to be.'

‘She is a fool! She must have heard about Mr. Ardrossan.’

‘Yes, of course; but she is very pertinacious. Some one has told her that Olive is going back to India with me; so I suppose she thought it was off.’

‘If it were not for the Ardrossan affair, Olive could not do better than go there—she would be snapped up directly.’

‘She would not go. She hates me; and then Chesterfield is so strange about her. He sits and thinks of that dreadful divorce business until he is quite low-spirited. That’s why I have given myself so much trouble about Olive—I can’t bear to see him look so dismal. He would be happier if she were married. She is a sullen, disagreeable girl—at least, she is so now. I should have thought she might have been very happy with me. I could have got on with her, I am sure, if she would have allowed me. I could live with anyone who was at all nice to me.’

This was perfectly true. Lady Brooke could have spent years in Olive’s company untroubled by any thought of the injury which she had done her. Lady Brooke never suffered from remorse—had no compunctious visitings of any kind, unless, as was rarely the case, she saw that she had missed some good which had once been within her grasp.

‘Is Olive sullen? Well, I’ll talk to her.’

‘Do. Make her understand her position thoroughly. It really is necessary.’

‘Indeed it is,’ said Mrs. Raymond gravely. ‘It would not do to have it known and talked about.’

Lady Brooke waited until the last day of her stay in England before she again tried to see Olive. When she arrived in Harley Street, Mrs. Brooke, who had been on guard for days to keep her away from Olive, had just gone out on business. Dr. Brooke too was out. John had been told not to allow Lady Brooke to enter the house, but Lady Brooke would take no denial.

‘Miss Brooke is in her own room lying down, you say, and can see no one! She can’t object to see her own mother. If anything is said about your letting me go upstairs to her, I’ll take all the blame on myself. I must see her. I am surprised that anyone should think of trying to prevent me!’ And without listening to another word, and nimble as a girl of seventeen, she ran upstairs and made her way into Olive’s room.

Olive was not lying down or ill, but sitting by the window, trying to copy the colour of Willie’s sycamore-buds. They were in a Salviati glass before her, and both her work itself and the thoughts to which it gave rise were very pleasant to her.

‘Olive,’ said Lady Brooke, as she burst thus suddenly in

on her, 'I have come to see you, because to-morrow I leave England.'

Olive rose and grasped the edge of the table to support herself. Then she stood looking at her stepmother with as much calmness as she could muster, but with an expression of intense dismay and dislike.

'Olive,' said Lady Brooke gently, 'you seem to have some very strong feeling against me. I have none against you. I do not like to go to another quarter of the world with the impression that something is amiss between us. I know girls often dislike their stepmothers, but still I have not been such an unkind one to you that you need wish not to see me before I go. Now, have I?'

Olive was silent; she was struggling with emotions of the most painful kind, which, in obedience to her mother's wish, she was desirous to conceal.

'You left my lodgings suddenly more than a week ago—you have twice left my house in the same way without telling me—once you say it was to avoid seeing a gentleman. You can't plead that excuse this time, for you went away with one. It was very odd of you to do that; but be odd if you like—only don't be so remarkably unfriendly. Why have you shut yourself up here and done your best not to see me?'

'I—I thought it was better not——' Olive began.

'Why better not? I have given up the idea of gaining your affection, but I have done nothing to make it impossible for you to stay under the same roof with me for the two or three days which had to pass before I left. Think how strange it must seem to everyone! Olive, your father's wife has at any rate a right to be treated with the appearance of respect.'

'Don't speak of this to me,' cried Olive, putting the greatest constraint on herself. 'Do not make me say——'

'But I want you to say all that you have to say—I want to know how I am to answer your father when he asks for an explanation of your treatment of me.'

'Tell him what you like—only leave me alone.'

'Leave you alone! You talk in a way which I don't understand.'

'Leave me,' said Olive faintly; 'leave me, I beg of you—I must not try to make you understand.'

On this Lady Brooke's pale face flushed rose-red, and she exclaimed, 'Do you order me to leave the room, Olive?' Then she changed her manner and said, almost tearfully, 'I give you my solemn word of honour that I have tried to be a good mother to you.'

The words which she heard, the restraint which she was compelled to put on herself, the terrible excitement of the scene, were almost more than Olive could endure; she sank into her chair and hid her face in her hands. She was almost beside herself with pain. Lady Brooke's eyes were fixed on her; she saw how she was suffering, and said kindly, 'Dear child, I have only come to say good-bye—I am going back to your father. What am I to say to him?'

'What you think right,' replied Olive very bitterly.

'That's not what I meant. Of course I will try to say what is right,' said Lady Brooke simply, as if she were quite too good and high-minded to do otherwise. 'I mean to make light of the little differences which have arisen between us. Indeed, I dare say before I reach India I shall have forgotten them; but that's not what I wanted to say—I meant that I should like to be able to tell him that you were about to make a happy marriage.'

Olive looked up with flashing eyes, and the expression of her face was so proudly indignant that Lady Brooke cried, 'You surely don't object to my taking an interest in you?'

'I do. I will not have it! Leave me and my future, and all that concerns me, entirely alone!'

'Olive, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! You know that I came back to England entirely on your account. I did not want you to feel yourself an outcast.'

'I do not know it or believe it. I did not feel an outcast before you came. Besides, in my family, the outcasts have been the noblest people.'

'Taunts, sneers, endless reproaches—that's what I have from you, Olive. Well, I will go away, knowing that I have done my very best to be a good mother to you.'

'"Mother"! Don't use the word! No one can be so good to a child as her own mother—you should have left me mine!'

'I should have left you yours! I had nothing to do with your losing her. Olive, at last you drive me to speak openly—it will save pain in the end. You are making yourself miserable by believing that letter which Hannah Deanham wrote to you. I know you are. She wrote to you, and she wrote to me too. She is a person who will tell lies on any side, if she is but well paid.'

'I paid her nothing,' said Olive very bitterly.

'I dare say not; you perhaps had not the opportunity of seeing her, but you believe the low gossip she put in her letter. You are influenced against me by a servant—and yet you know what she hinted at is untrue. The law proved it to be so. Your

poor mother—I do not wish to pain you by speaking ill of her—was very giddy and unprincipled.'

Olive was goaded to the last pitch of endurance. For a moment she looked almost piteously in Lady Brooke's face. The words 'Leave me, I entreat you, or you will drive me to say what I ought not,' were on her lips; but Lady Brooke's face was hard as iron, and she added, 'Her conduct nearly killed your father.'

Olive sprang to her feet, opened a drawer in a cabinet, took out a small packet, and cried, 'Don't repeat that lie again! You have said it very often to me. Whatever was done to hurt my father was done by you—you have neither heart nor conscience. This parcel is yours—take it and go, and never come near me again!' And as Olive spoke she pushed towards Lady Brooke a small packet—not for worlds would she have encountered the risk of touching her hand by giving it otherwise. Outside the parcel was written, 'Part of fifty pounds of Lady Brooke's money left by Hannah Deanham for the use of her sister Mary, now residing at 33 Mulberry Street, Bethnal Green, which Mary Gardiner desires to return, now that she knows that it was earned by a crime.'

Olive had not intended to give this to Lady Brooke herself—she had meant to send it to her; hence this long explanation outside. Lady Brooke started when she read it, and turned very pale. Then she looked almost piteously at Olive and said, 'You have seen Mary Gardiner? She is in England!'

'I have seen her, and heard her story, and have in my possession proof that it is true.'

'It is not true, and no such proof can exist. Hannah Deanham's word is as much to be relied on as her sister's.'

'I have four letters of Hannah Deanham's, in each of which she owns that she committed perjury by your instigation.'

'Tell me what you intend to do?' said Lady Brooke, after a dismayed pause. Her voice faltered—she seemed to acknowledge that her future was in Olive's power. Olive shook her head—words failed her.

'Olive,' pleaded Lady Brooke, 'your father and I have lived very happily together for nearly twenty years. It seems a terrible thing to ruin the rest of his life—he is an old man now.'

'Do not talk to me of your happiness,' cried Olive wildly. 'How dare you? If you have lived happily with him you must be a wretch to be able to do it. Did you never think of the wife whom he loved so much before you married him, and of the state to which you had brought her?'

'Of course I did. But most of her unhappiness was caused by

her brother ; you must know that. She never even pretended to love her husband.'

'She tried to love him ; she would have loved him in the end. She faithfully did her duty to him. She obeyed him when he told her to forbid Mr. Lilburn to come to the house ; and if she did not love him quite so much as she ought to have done, she must have loved her child. You were her greatest friend, and you robbed her of her husband and home and child. You took from her her good name, and left her nothing—not even her reason ! For twenty years she lived, sometimes quite mad with misery, always half beside herself. I have been told that her one cry, day and night, used to be, "Let me have my child back."'

'You can see her now,' pleaded Lady Brooke ; 'she has got you back now.'

'She is dead !'

'Dead !' echoed Lady Brooke.

'Yes, dead ; she died a few hours after she saw me. She had lived in poverty and disgrace—not allowed to see her own child. She knew that if ever I heard her name at all, it would be as that of a woman too wicked to be loved.'

'If she is dead,' cried Lady Brooke eagerly—'I did not know it, of course, or I would not have spoken as I did—but if she is dead, you have no reason to do such a cruel thing as making Mary Gardiner's story public would be. Why should you disturb our happiness, Olive ? No one will be the better for it if you do.'

Olive's lip curled. There was no making this woman think of anyone but herself. 'I don't envy your happiness,' she said most bitterly, 'but I am not going to disturb it. My mother's last words were that she did not wish the truth to be made known. She said that my father had chosen to doubt her when, if he had trusted her, his doing so would have made all the difference, and that it was nothing to her now if he changed his opinion. She did not want him to be miserable, or your children to be branded with disgrace. I shall obey her wishes—you have nothing to fear from me.'

'It was very noble of her, and very sensible too. Olive, one thing I must beg of you.'

'Ask nothing of me—say no more ; go back to my father and be happy if you can. I have told you what my mother said. I have nothing more to say to you. I only wish you would go out of my sight.'

Lady Brooke was thoroughly uncomfortable. The strongest feeling of her nature was a desire to be at ease in mind and body. She earnestly wished that Olive would say just one word or two

which would recur to her memory when she recalled this scene, and enable her to feel that, terrible as the interview had been, it had on the whole ended better than could have been expected. She did not wish to remember that she had been driven forth with shame and contempt. She looked to see if there was any sign of Olive softening. She could see none. 'I leave England to-morrow. We shall probably never meet again,' said she, thinking that this might lead to the comforting sentence being spoken.

'Meet again!' cried Olive. 'I will never see you again—how dare you speak of such a thing, after what you have done?' And as she spoke her gaze was unflinching.

Lady Brooke could not meet it—she hesitated and almost trembled. How was she to leave the room? 'You have behaved very well——' she began.

'Hush!' cried Olive. 'I will listen to no more, certainly not to thanks. I have obeyed my mother, that is all. Leave me at once, if you please; I can bear no more of this.'

Lady Brooke turned, and, with her head bent down in as much of shame as she was capable of feeling, crept out of the room and left the house.

CHAPTER XLII.

Widow. And now you know my meaning.

Kath. A very mean meaning.

Taming of the Shrew.

Ros. Patience once more, whiles our compact is urged.

As You Like It.

MRS. RAYMOND had at least a dozen engagements for a certain April afternoon, and there was not one of them which did not seem to promise a very fair amount of enjoyment; but she left them all unfulfilled, and went to Harley Street to speak to her niece Olive on a matter of importance. 'I don't like having to do this,' thought she. 'I don't like it at all, but I have no choice. Olive can't be such a fool as to want any advice from me about Mr. Ardrossan, but I must keep my promise.' She asked if Mrs. Brooke was at home. For years, when she had put that question, John had muttered sulkily, 'She is in the study, ma'am. She told me to say she was engaged.' To this she had as invariably responded, 'Oh, very well; say I've called.' For Mrs. Raymond, once a great beauty, and still, as she hoped, a very fascinating woman, didn't see why she need show any anxiety to see her ink-fingered and absorbed sister-in-law, unless her sister-in-law had an equal desire to see her.

To-day John looked alert and said, 'Mrs. Brooke is at home ; she's in the drawing-room.'

'Alone?'

'Yes, alone, ma'am.'

'Writing?'

'Oh dear, no, ma'am.'

Mrs. Raymond could not believe her senses. 'Selina,' said she, 'I want to talk to you ; but first tell me if you have brought Mary Ullathorne round?'

'No.'

'Have you tried?'

'Yes, Richard went, and said he was very sorry I had made one of my characters seem to be rather like her by seizing on two or three of her little peculiarities——'

'You don't mean that you allowed him to own that any part of that character was drawn from her?'

'I could not help doing that—you see, it was.'

'You should have sworn that you drew it from me. You should have sworn anything, to put her in a good-humour again.'

Mrs. Brooke looked indignant. 'I am not going to tell untruths for the sake of her money.'

'I would tell mountains of untruths for it. What would I not say and swear?—I would even maintain that she was sweet-tempered. She will never forgive you.'

'It is vexing, but it can't be helped. I am sorry, for Richard's sake. Esther, what a run that book would have if only we could put a flyleaf into it saying, "This book has cost the author a legacy of 70,000*l*." I really do think a generous public would hasten to make good the loss. However, I shall always be grieved to think that I have hurt her feelings.'

'Never mind her feelings. She has none. I don't care a pin for that part of the matter. I am thinking of poor Richard—it must be a fearful disappointment to him. Vincent would have killed me if I had done such a thing. Selina, tell me about Olive and Mr. Ardrossan. She will accept him, I suppose?'

'Mr. Ardrossan! Is he likely to propose to her?'

Mrs. Raymond stared—this vernal simplicity, this mental opacity, was quite beyond her power of comprehension.

'He certainly has been a great deal here lately, and we are glad to see him. He comes every other day.'

'Well, what does that look like?'

'I have never remarked that he was fond of Olive.'

'Will she accept him if he offers to her?' interrupted Mrs. Raymond impatiently.

‘But he is far too old for her—he must be twenty years older than she is.’

‘If he were forty years older, it would still be a splendid match for her! Selina, do show a little more worldly wisdom. I’ll go and speak to Olive. Where is she?’

She went to her niece. She approached the subject daintily and delicately; but as soon as Olive caught a glimpse of her meaning, she was up in arms in a moment and cried, ‘Aunt Esther, you are as bad as my stepmother! That is just the way in which she used to talk to me as soon as any gentleman had said three or four civil things to me.’

‘Quite right too. Only a part of a mother’s duty. Olive dear, your stepmother, as you call her, is gone, and nothing I say can make any difference now, but I must say that you treated that poor woman very ill. Let me speak—don’t be vexed with me. I am your aunt, and have known you since you were a baby—you really treated her cruelly. Forgive me, but I must for once remind you that the circumstances were peculiar; and if, when she came to England, she had left you to yourself, and not taken you everywhere with her, as she did, no one could have blamed her. She was not bound to feel much interest in you, but she did. She devoted herself to you all the time she was here, and never once left you for any pleasant visit of her own.’

‘She was afraid to leave me. She was keeping watch to see that certain persons of whom she was much afraid did not approach me. She was in constant terror lest they should tell me things which it was important to her to conceal.’

‘Oh, nonsense, Olive! your aunt Selina has infected you with her love of imagining plots for novels.’

‘Aunt Esther, this is a painful subject, but my stepmother has gone, and you may as well know the truth about her. It is a secret which I am forbidden to make public. It must not be known beyond our own family. Go to Aunt Selina and ask her to tell you what we know about my stepmother. I would rather you should hear it from her than from me.’

Mrs. Raymond began to be afraid that Olive was mad. More than once lately she had seen signs of great mental excitement in her, and had feared that there was a danger of her being attacked by her mother’s terrible malady. She looked anxiously at her now, and crept away to Mrs. Brooke, not really believing that there was anything to hear, but wishful to pacify Olive.

After some time she returned, looking pale and nervous, and as if she had received a shock she would not readily forget. She stooped and kissed Olive, and said, ‘Dear child, your aunts have

always loved you ; they must now love you more than ever. What I have heard makes me still more anxious to say what I came to say. Don't be vexed with me if I try to gather from you what your intentions are with respect to Mr. Ardrossan. It is so important that you should have a home of your own.'

'Is it not rather indelicate to begin to settle what you will do about a gentleman who has never so much as shown that he has any intention of asking you to marry him ?' cried Olive.

'Oh, it is constantly done,' said Mrs. Raymond. 'You must have an idea what you will do.'

'He is very kind to me, but he does not care for me in the way you seem to think.'

'I know better. Olive, he is a charming man—so handsome, so intellectual, so distinguished-looking !'

'Yes,' said Olive warmly, 'he really is.'

'Oh, I see it is all right. I was sure you could not be blind to his attractions. I need say no more.'

'I am not blind to his attractions. I like him immensely, and it would be very ungrateful if I didn't ; but I must tell you that, supposing such a very unlikely thing happened as that he should propose to me, I should not accept him.'

'But that's absurd—so absurd that I can't believe it. Have you any reason for refusing him ?'

'No very special reason,' replied Olive, looking rather confused.

'Then I may as well tell you that there is a very special reason why you ought to accept him—why you must accept him, indeed. If you refuse him, a very terrible thing will happen—there will be a fearful scandal.'

Olive looked, as she felt, intensely curious, but waited for her aunt to continue ; and Mrs. Raymond slowly and painfully revealed to her that when Lady Brooke came to England she had felt her resources entirely inadequate to clothing a beautiful girl like herself for fashionable society, where endless changes of costume and the most lavish expenditure are required, and she had adopted a plan not by any means unheard of in the set to which she belonged. She had taken her to Madame Filoselle—a lady who, as it was well known—though such things are not spoken of—was in the habit of taking six young ladies under her protection, as it were, and clothing them entirely, from their first entrance into society until their marriage. This she always did with the utmost liberality and secrecy, but, of course, under certain conditions. The first was that the young lady herself was so beautiful and attractive in every way that it was absolutely certain that she would be sought in marriage by men of

rank and wealth, if only she was enabled by Madame Filoselle's assistance to appear to advantage in the society which they frequented. Then, too, she was to make this good marriage within a reasonable time. Thirdly, Madame Filoselle's bill—which would naturally be much larger because of her having to wait for the money, and because the transaction involved some risk—was to be paid by the bride soon after she had secured her rich husband, after which, common gratitude would demand that she should continue to order all her dresses from the arbiter of her fate—Madame Filoselle. Mrs. Raymond told this to Olive in her own words and with many assurances that it was a common enough arrangement. People did not talk of such things, of course, but everyone of a certain class knew quite well that they were done. Olive heard her in silence and the deepest shame. Her head sank lower and lower, her hands were clasped in helpless dismay; she felt as if she could not find words to speak. Her aunt was pleased to see that she recognised the gravity of the situation; she was certain that she would make no difficulty now. Mr. Ardrossan was the rock of safety to which she would fly and cling—what else could she do?

‘So that’s the long and short of my story,’ said Mrs. Raymond. ‘Don’t let it vex you. One is apt to be startled at a thing of this kind on first hearing of it, but it seemed the kindest and best arrangement we could make to secure your happiness, and it’s continually done. There are always six girls in society who are dressed this way. Women like Madame Filoselle have it in their power to do an immensity of good. Many a pretty, nice girl, who has a good home and husband of the right sort, would be in a very different plight if she had not had the good fortune to please Madame Filoselle when taken to her. You are astonished, I see,’ added Mrs. Raymond, who was a little uneasy at Olive’s strange looks and silence. ‘Of course you must be. But you must own that Madame Filoselle has kept her part of the bargain most handsomely. She grudges nothing when once she takes a fancy and sees that her efforts will be rewarded with success. She took to you amazingly. She is beginning to be rather impatient, though. You see, most of her young ladies get something settled during their first season. She is beginning to fidget a little, but I am sure she will go on being nice for some time to come—quite long enough for you to do all you want.’

All the blood in Olive’s body seemed to rush to her face as she said, ‘So help me God, I will never wear one thing that has come from her house again!’

‘You dislike the idea of the arrangement so much?’ said Mrs. Raymond, without the most remote conception of how Olive

loathed the ignominy to which she had so unconsciously been pledged. 'I can readily imagine your doing so. We won't speak of it again—only it is right you should know of it—you would be acting in the dark if you didn't. But don't worry yourself, dear; it will be all right. You will marry Mr. Ardrossan—he is a charming man, and, what is better still, he is as rich as a Jew. She won't expect to be paid the whole sum you owe her at once—you can give it to her little by little, as you have it.'

'How horrible! How shameful! Do you mean that I am to steal it when I can do so unobserved?' asked Olive bitterly. 'Aunt, we may as well understand each other. If I loved Mr. Ardrossan so much that I knew refusing him actually meant dying, I would still refuse him. After what you have told me, nothing should ever induce me to accept him. You and my step-mother made this bargain. I know what kind of a woman she is, but I did think that *you* would be worlds above having anything to do with such degradation as this!'

'Olive, say what you like—it is natural—you are taken by surprise. I won't be offended with you. I must put the matter plainly before you. You will be obliged to marry Mr. Ardrossan, or some one else who is rich enough to pay for all the things you have had. They must be paid for—that woman won't go without her money.'

'I would die rather than do such an infamous thing.'

'Nonsense, dear! Just look what much worse things than this are done every day by people, and good people too, for the sake of securing things they want. It's absurd to think so seriously of it. Depend upon it, Mr. Ardrossan will be only too glad to pay your bill, and do anything else for you; and if you have scruples of conscience, you can make less money do for some time afterwards,—until you have made up the sum you cost him, you know, dear. It's nothing, Olive, I assure you; I could tell you of friends of your own who are doing the very same thing, and whose feelings are quite as sensitive as yours can possibly be.'

'I have nothing to do with their feelings,' cried Olive indignantly. 'They ought to be ashamed of themselves if they know what they are doing! Perhaps they have been betrayed into it, as I have been. Poor things! I pity them when they are forced to reveal to their husbands that they were dressed out to catch the eye of rich men, and have only married them for their money.'

'“Only married them for their money!” That is such nonsense, Olive—such romantic nonsense! In novels, of course, you read of vulgar, uneducated, ugly, rich men, as opposed to bewitchingly handsome and virtuous low-born geniuses of poor men; but so

far as my experience goes, men of the upper classes possess every attraction a poor and virtuous genius can do, *plus* the comfort of having money enough to make life easy and delightful to the women who are lucky enough to be fancied by them. Have you, for instance, ever seen any poor man, or even any rich one, who, you could honestly say, was more attractive than Mr. Ardrossan ?’

Olive blushed deeply and said, ‘I think I have.’

‘Rich or poor ?’

‘Poor, or at least what you would call poor.’

‘And does he admire you ? I mean, is he likely to ask you to marry him ?’

‘Oh, I don’t know—he might.’

‘Well, it would have been very silly to accept this poor gentleman at any time, but now it is quite out of the question. This Filoselle business makes it impossible for you to marry a poor man.’

‘On the contrary, it makes it impossible for me to marry a rich one !’ cried Olive with great determination. ‘I would rather die than do that, now that I know what a shameful confession I should have to make to him.’

‘Oh, nonsense ! the thing is done, and can’t be undone. You may as well make the confession to a rich man who loves you, and who can pay your bill without more effort than signing a cheque implies. Your poor man would have to be told all the same, and could do nothing but look dismal ; and there’s no great help in that. Besides, the talk would be dreadful—newspapers catch at good gossip like this so eagerly—it would be placarded in every paper in London.’

Olive looked shocked but immovable. ‘I shall pack up all the things I ever had from Madame Filoselle,’ cried she, ‘and return them to her. You can tell her that she need never expect me to marry a rich man to pay her, for I never shall.’

‘You must be mad, Olive !’

‘I don’t care if I am. I had rather be mad than bad, and I should have been a wretch if I had made this agreement with Madame Filoselle.’

‘Don’t waste time in talk of that kind. Don’t you see that the woman must be paid ? I don’t know what you have had during the twelve months that she has dressed you, but I am sure her bill must be nearly a thousand pounds—your Court-dress cost 70*l*. You say you will return the things. That would only enrage her ; it wouldn’t save a penny. They were supplied to you and worn by you, and she will make you pay for them, whether you return them or not.’

'I will not have them here to remind me of anything so disgraceful.'

'You are not very polite, my dear. I told you the idea was partly mine. I am not usually supposed to lend my countenance to disgraceful things.' And as she spoke, Mrs. Raymond looked at Olive for some admission that the sanction which she had given to the arrangement was a guarantee of its rightfulness; but more than one of her aunt's bits of doubtful morality was rankling in Olive's mind, and she could give no such assurance. Mrs. Raymond began to see that matters were desperate, and to make moving appeals. They too were useless. Then she said, 'If knowing this prevents your marrying Mr. Ardrossan, I shall never forgive myself.'

'It won't. If ever I refuse him, my refusal won't be caused by what you have said.'

'Would you really have refused him if I had not told you this?'

'I should.'

'You don't like him?'

'I like him immensely.'

'Then, why do such a foolish thing?'

'I need not give a reason for that,' said Olive.

'You like some one else better?'

Olive was silent, but silence amounted to a confession.

'Your poor man couldn't pay Madame Filoselle!' cried Mrs. Raymond in dismay.

'Of course not; why should he?'

'Then, what are you going to do about her?'

'Nothing at all; I made no bargain with her, and decline to be bound by one made by other people. I thought my step-mother had money from my father to pay for everything of that kind. She always led me to think so. I have fifty pounds of my own that Aunt Selina put in the bank for me when I was a child; I will give you that to take to Madame Filoselle. Papa can pay the rest if he likes, but I never can; and if she makes a fuss or a scandal, I shall tell the truth. Don't look so distressed, Aunt Esther.'

'What a disgrace!' gasped Mrs. Raymond; 'what a fearful disgrace!'

'A little disgrace is better than a big one. It would be much worse if I did as you wish,' cried Olive warmly.

'You are mad; you are hopelessly wrong-headed! I must get your other relations to speak to you.' But on second thoughts Mrs. Raymond found that this would only add to her distress, for, unhappy lady, to whom was she to turn? There was not one of

Olive's relations who would take a sensible view of the subject. Selina would be worse than Olive; Dr. Brooke would be a thousand times worse than Selina. He would be perfectly frantic at the very idea of such a degrading transaction. Mrs. Ullathorne would be more indignant than either, for such doings belonged to a world which was quite beyond her ken. Besides, she was in the vein for quarrelling with her relatives and cutting them out of her will. She most certainly must not be told—any sacrifice was better than that. 'Olive, promise me not to speak of this to anyone just yet. I will go to Madame Filoselle's and see if I can get her to be reasonable. I must see if your uncle Vincent can afford to pay her. I know he has no spare money at present—he very seldom has; but to avert disgrace, perhaps——' And the poor lady sighed. Then she added piteously, 'Perhaps after all you may marry Mr. Ardrossan?'

'Never!' cried Olive; 'I would not do such a thing for the world.'

In the deepest distress and agitation Mrs. Raymond took her departure. She was forced to go and say a word or two to Mrs. Brooke before she left the house.

Mrs. Brooke was reading—she had not had leisure for such an enjoyment for years. She looked up and said rather ruefully, 'After nearly two hours of solid talk you must have persuaded poor Olive into any marriage you wish,' but Mrs. Raymond's looks showed no sense of success; all she said was, 'Olive is very vexing; she says she likes Mr. Ardrossan immensely, but will refuse him if he offers. I am terribly disappointed.' Mrs. Brooke looked quite composed. Her theory was, that if a girl wanted to marry a man, she did marry him; and if she didn't want to marry him, there was no more to be said.

Seeing she was slow to express sympathy, Mrs. Raymond cried indignantly, 'Selina, you are as bad as she is; you surely understand what a splendid match it would be?'

'Not unless she wishes it.'

'She ought to wish it. She is a stupid goose! This will be the second good marriage she has missed. She will get a crooked stick at last, and I for one shall be very glad. She deserves to do so.'

'Oh, no,' said Mrs. Brooke, who was certain that Olive's views on marriage were much more likely to be such as she herself could sympathise with than those of her worldly-minded sister-in-law. 'Oh, no, when Olive marries she will choose well. Mr. Ardrossan is far too old.'

'Then she ought to have taken Sir John Ellerton—he was young enough.'

‘He was too stupid; he had nothing in him.’

‘Then she ought to take Mr. Ardrossan; he is clever enough.’

‘Wait till the right man comes.’

‘There is a right man, only he is a wrong one. There is some one whom she fancies I have made her own it. Do you know who he can be?’

‘I haven’t the least idea; not the least idea.’

‘Nor have I,’ said Mrs. Raymond. ‘He must be some very insignificant, stupid sort of person, or some of us would have noticed him talking to her. I am quite out of patience with Olive—I never saw such a stupidly self-willed girl.’

‘I have great faith in Olive,’ said Mrs. Brooke calmly. ‘Sir John Ellerton, with his youth, and good looks, and health, and wealth, was the golden casket which seemed the most attractive of all to the common eye; Mr. Ardrossan, pale, refined, and learned, but already falling into the rank of veterans, is the silver casket; but somewhere or other lurks the humbler-looking but infinitely more precious leaden casket, to which Olive only possesses the true key. She will choose for herself—she knows whom she can love and reverence, and she won’t give her love lightly. I don’t mind her being difficult to please, or taking a poor man when she might have a rich one; I shall be quite content with the leaden casket, if it holds what is best for her.’

Mrs. Raymond made a gesture of extreme impatience. ‘You are a novelist,’ she said, ‘and you think that quoting a poet or bringing in a fanciful allusion settles a difficult question. Gold and silver and leaden caskets have nothing to do with what we are talking about. We can’t have Olive wanting to marry a man who is not able to keep her!’

(To be concluded.)

BELGRAVIA.

DECEMBER 1880.

A Confidential Agent.

BY JAMES PAYN.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A NEW ARRIVAL.

‘**H**OW can ye pipe, ye little birds, and I so weary, full of care?’ inquires the poet in his desolation; and the demonstration of happiness in our fellow-creatures, the while we are ourselves bowed down with trouble, jars on us even more cruelly than the glad voices of nature. It was Christmas-time, and into the bereaved little household in Cavendish Grove some echoes of the surrounding jollity perforce penetrated. Husbands came home from business, not for a few hours only, but for one or two days of gladsome leisure, and were received with shouts of delight from their juveniles. Sabey heard them, and for once could not thank Heaven for the happiness of children. No holly decked the house as in old times; Matthew, old-fashioned in his habits, and somewhat conventional in his observances, had been fond of ‘keeping Christmas’ in the ancient fashion; and the women, country-bred, had been wont to adorn every room with glistening leaf and ruddy berry; but they could not do so now, for it would have been but a mockery of their woe. Below-stairs, indeed, the servant girl had permission, as usual, to invite her father and mother to the annual feast; but even she felt the gloom of Matthew’s absence, for master was—or, alas! had been—a great favourite with her, as masters will be who never speak a cross word. Mary did not pretend to understand the ins and outs of the Moor Street question, but she had the faith which brings forth works; for when the butcher’s boy had ventured to tell her, not in malice, but as an interesting piece of news, that a reward was offered for Mr. Helston’s apprehension on the charge of having stolen ‘diamants,’ she had slapped one cheek for him with

such good will that—notwithstanding the season—he had not dreamt of offering the other, but had fled incontinently. Even the sprig of mistletoe which the greengrocer's man had brought as a free gift had been received with a 'Drat your impercence!' instead of that 'Get along with you!' which, while seeming to discourage, had invited him on previous occasions.

Her 'other master,' as she sometimes entitled Uncle Stephen,—being not so independent of spirit on her own account as on that of others,—she described as being 'very low in his mind,' which she had plenty of opportunities of observing while she waited upon him at his lonely meals. For there were now times when even Amy had not the courage or the strength to share them. It was not mere disinclination that prevented her doing so. Although wounded to the very core by the apostasy of Mr. Durham with respect to Matthew, she was just enough to perceive that he was not to blame for being unable to resist the force of conviction; and never for a moment did she forget the obligations which she, and Sabey, and Matthew himself, were under to the good old man. It was her duty certainly to have borne him company in his solitude, and she would have done so had it been possible. But her spirits, already depressed by the catastrophe of Matthew, had been for the present fairly broken down by the loss of her lover. With Sabey, indeed, she kept up the appearance of philosophy; for to have shown herself as she really was would have been to add a grievous weight to her sister's burthen; but this effort to hide her feelings cost her dear, and rendered her still more unfit for the companionship of others.

On Christmas-day, however, she did make shift to come down to dinner. (Sabey also had attempted to do so, but some pang of recollection, or association, had proved too intense for her at the last moment, and she had remained upstairs with baby.) The meal was early, and, as it happened, it was the first time Mr. Durham and herself had met that morning. He looked very worn and wan, but mustered up a smile to greet her.

'If I do not wish you a happy Christmas, Amy,' he said, in a low and gentle tone, 'you will understand the reason.'

Even that was too much for the poor girl—or perhaps it was the tenderness with which he spoke that moved her—and she burst into tears.

'I am glad to see you cry, my dear,' he said simply. 'Do not be ashamed of it,' he added, perceiving her efforts to restrain herself; 'I would cry too if I could. How is Sabey?'

'The same—the same. Only, I think, the day—being what it is—has upset her.'

Mr. Durham sighed and held up his hands.

'Christmas-day!' he murmured bitterly. "'Glad tidings of great joy!'"

'It has done me good, however,' said Amy humbly. 'It has reminded me of my duty—my loving duty. Will you kiss me and forgive me, Uncle Stephen?'

'I will kiss you, my dear, but I have nothing to forgive.'

'Yes, yes; I have done wrong. Matthew himself would say so if he could speak. I have been hard and cruel to you.'

'Not to me, my dear, not to me, but to yourself—and to another.'

'Then, I ask his pardon too,' she murmured.

'May I tell him so?'

'No, no; that is—any message from me would be misunderstood.'

'Do you know whither he is gone, Amy?'

'No; don't tell me; all is over between us, past and gone for ever. Spare me, I beseech you, spare me,' she added imploringly.

'Well, we will speak no more of him just now. I wish you to know, however, that his last act before leaving England——'

'England?'

'Yes. I say, his last act was to draw up a will for me by which dear Sabey will very soon be freed from at least material anxieties. I mention it in case, for her child's sake, such fears, in addition to her other woes, should be pressing upon her.'

'How good and kind you are!'

'She does not think so,' sighed Uncle Stephen.

'Indeed, indeed she does!' cried Amy earnestly.

'And does she know how I have been convinced against my will as regards Matthew?' inquired the old man eagerly.

'Oh, no; oh, no. If she did—with me, much as I love Matthew and believe in him, and shall do so while life is in me, it is different—but——'

'"'But if Sabey knew——" you were about to say.'

'Uncle Stephen, she must never know.'

'I understand. If she did, she would not take a penny of my money, dead or alive; and never forgive me.'

'Indeed, I fear it.'

'But if, in the mean time, something should occur which puts beyond all doubt—all hope—the question on which we differ?'

'You mean, if Matthew should be proved guilty?'

'Yes. Do not be angry; I merely put a supposititious case; if you will have it so, an impossible one.'

'In such a case,' said Amy slowly, 'the child might benefit by

your good intentions; the mother would die. But there can be no such proof.'

Here there was a loud double knock at the front door. 'What is that?' cried Amy, with a quick start.

'I cannot tell. It may be what I fear and you deny.'

She shook her head. 'It is not that,' she said.

'And yet you shuddered, Amy.'

'Yes; because it may be tidings of his death—of his dishonour, never.'

Here the door opened, and the servant-maid was pushed aside by a short, spare old man, with withered face, but keen and piercing eyes. 'How are you?' he said quickly. 'You don't know me, but I know you. You're Mr. Durham—his uncle, like myself; and you are Amy Thurlow, his wife's sister.'

'It is Mr. Roger Helston, from Latbury,' explained Amy to Uncle Stephen.

'Yes, I believe so; though things have happened enough to make one doubt one's own identity,' put in the visitor with irritation. 'What is the meaning of it—this reward for Matthew's apprehension?'

'It is an infamous and lying charge made by Lady Pargiter,' answered Amy.

'Of course it is. My nephew, and a thief! Why, damn her impudence! I'd as soon believe he was—well, a unicorn. But what does it mean? I'll make her pay for it; he shall have the best counsel in all England—Stork must lead—if it costs me a thousand pounds. We'll lay the damages at ten thousand. Where is he?'

'Heaven only knows,' said Mr. Durham gravely.

'Oh, I see,' replied the other impetuously: 'Matthew has not turned up yet. Stork shall be retained, however, forthwith. My nephew, and a Helston, called a thief! That shall cost her ladyship a pretty penny. Where's Matthew's wife?'

'She is upstairs, sir,' said Amy, 'too unwell both in mind and body—'

'Ay, ay, sick and sorry too, no doubt,' interrupted the other brusquely. 'I see you are going to dine. As I have touched nothing since I read this cursed thing at Latbury last night, I'll just sit down and peck a bit. At meals I never listen to any matter of moment, the discussion of which always interferes with digestion; but after dinner you shall tell me what it all means.'

The first tidings Mr. Helston senior had heard of Matthew's disappearance had, it seemed, been derived from the publication of the reward, since he had just returned from America, whither

he had been on important business. If it was not his habit to listen to other people at dinner, that did not prevent his talking himself; and before the meal was over, he had put his companions in full possession of the reasons for his presence in Cavendish Grove.

After Matthew's departure from Latbury he had missed him much, and would gladly have held out the hand of reconciliation. He seemed to have expected that the young fellow would have made the first advance; but, as he did not do so, pride stepped in and moved him to send for a far-away cousin of about the same age as Matthew to fill his place in the office. This youngster, as he had previously satisfied himself, had one good point—he had not the slightest leaning towards the mechanical arts. But with this negative virtue his merits appeared to have ended. No Madge had any metal to attract him, but, on the other hand, he had been very impressionable to the charms of Moll and Bet. His behaviour, indeed, had scandalised the old lawyer not a little. 'Now, Matthew,' said the old man (as though poor Amy had been a lay figure), 'had only made a fool of himself with gals on two occasions; the first was a mere fleeting fancy—— Eh?'

For Uncle Stephen, whose thoughts had flashed to Bleak Street and Lucy Mortlock, here groaned involuntarily.

'Oh, there was nothing wrong, sir,' continued Mr. Helston with irritation, imagining that he had been called to order on the ground of propriety; 'moreover, the young woman most fortunately ran off with somebody else. The other affair was more serious. Miss Thurlow's presence, of which you are so good as to remind me, prevents my speaking upon that subject. I still think Matthew's marriage was a mistake, but I have forgiven it. Well, as I say, he made but two escapades among the petticoats—which is much below the average. Then, Richard (his successor) was a born fool besides—the very last thing (not even excepting a knave) which is wanted in a lawyer's office. To give you an extreme instance of it, it was he himself who on the very day of my return to Latbury pointed out to me the reward in the newspaper, thinking doubtless to curry favour with me, or that it would give me pleasure to hear that poor Matthew was in trouble. "Thank you, Dick," I said, "for opening my eyes." "That Mr. Matthew must be bad indeed," he simpered. "You're a liar," I answered. "What I thanked you for was for letting me see into your character. That you were an idiot of course I knew, but I did not know you were a scoundrel." And I sent him packing. If Matthew chooses to come back to Latbury and be my partner, the place is open to him.'

'Alas, sir, you forget that your nephew is lost to us:' sobbed

Amy. She admired this old fellow for his sure and simple faith, and gave more credit to his honest indignation than perhaps it deserved. If Matthew had not borne his name, it is possible that the ties of blood would not so easily have moved him. As it was, his nephew's disgrace cast a shadow on himself which his proud nature resented. As for Uncle Stephen, he felt that two minutes' private talk with the old lawyer must of necessity scatter his confidence in his nephew's innocence to the winds, and in all probability his good will with it.

'Lost!' echoed Mr. Helston contemptuously. 'He won't be lost for long now that I have come to look for him. What's the matter?'

The maid had entered and whispered to Amy that there was some one in the hall who wished to speak to her 'very pertickler. And, oh! please, miss, it's a perliceman.'

Poor Amy's nerves for once failed her, but not her faith. She believed that some crisis had occurred in Matthew's case, or that Lady Pargiter had taken some cruel step. For the moment she could neither move nor speak.

'What's the matter?' repeated Mr. Helston, addressing the maid.

'Oh, sir, there's a perliceman in the passage.'

'What of that? One would think it was a burglar.'

He stepped nimbly to the door, where, indeed, one of the force was standing in the attitude of attention.

'Now, my man, what is it?'

'I have a message for Miss Amy Thurlow, sir, from Inspector Brail.'

'Very good; here she is. Let's have it.'

'Mr. Matthew Helston has been found, mum.'

'God in heaven be thanked!' she cried. 'Alive and well?'

'Oh, yes, alive, mum; but not to say well and hearty. I have been sent on ahead in a hansom cab to say as he will be here in half an hour. They're obliged to bring him pretty slow. He'll have to be put to bed and looked to.'

'Port—a glass of port for the young lady,' cried Mr. Helston vehemently. 'That's right. You're better now, aint you? You won't go into hysterics, not you; you're not a fool, like Cousin Richard.'

His rough but kindly tones had the best effect upon the poor girl. Mere sympathy and tenderness would have destroyed her self-possession utterly.

'He is not ill—I mean, not dangerously ill?' she murmured.

'No, mum; only a bit weak and off his head, having had nothing to eat for the last eight-and-forty hours.'

'Nothing to eat on Christmas-day!' exclaimed the old lawyer. 'What can it all mean?'

Amy had flown upstairs to her sister, so that his inquiry was addressed to Mr. Durham. Uncle Stephen, however, only shook his head and murmured, 'I know nothing.' The question that trembled on his own lips was, 'Is he innocent?' But they could not frame it.

There was a sharp knock at the front door; a sound of slithering footsteps as of men carrying some heavy body. But Uncle Stephen knew nothing of it. With a muttered cry of 'Matthew! Matthew!' which seemed to well from his very heart, the old man had fainted away.

CHAPTER I.

FOUND.

ARE men better than they seem, or worse? is a question that we are apt to answer according to our own circumstances in relation to them. When Fortune smiles upon us, our fellow-creatures appear in rose tints. 'There is a deal of kindness in the world,' we observe when we don't want it; or, at the least, 'Depend upon it, there is something good in everybody.' When Fortune frowns, we alter our opinion on this subject—it must be confessed, not altogether without reason. On the whole, it seems doubtful whether one is more often surprised by an act of generosity or by one of baseness. I have known quite noble things done by almost the last persons in the world one would have thought capable of them; and also, alas! some very base actions performed by the most high-principled persons. In many cases, perhaps, it has in reality been the merest toss-up whether the man should behave like a hero or a scoundrel; but we, who know nothing of the inward struggle, can only judge by the result. Although Mr. Signet had not absolutely told Miss Amy Thurlow that, if she would marry him, he would not prosecute her brother-in-law for theft,—but that if she wouldn't, he would pursue him with the utmost rigour of the law,—their last interview had certainly left upon her an impression of that nature. Perhaps the jeweller had not been unwilling that she should think the worst—even though it must needs put his own character in no very agreeable light—but though he had, as it were, held the screw in his fingers, he had had, to do him justice, no intention of putting it on. His nature was not chivalric, but he was not a Colonel

Kirk; and before he had proposed that bargain to Amy, let us remember, he had positively forbidden Mr. Brail to take any steps towards Matthew's apprehension. When he returned an unsuccessful suitor from Cavendish Grove, the detective informed him of Mr. Barlow's visit, and not only very frankly set before him all that that gentleman had stated, but also (for which, as we know, he had his private reasons) said all that could be said in favour of his mission.

'He is not gone to Paris on your behalf—of course not—but the main object of his journey is to reclaim the diamonds; and, considering his connection with Helston, he has as good a chance——'

'It's all nonsense,' interrupted Mr. Signet irritably. 'The game's up. If Lady Pargiter were not such a brute, I'd throw up the sponge and pay up at once.'

'That would be madness indeed, Mr. Signet. Where's her receipt?'

'What the deuce does the receipt signify, Mr. Brail, if she can prove the diamonds to be in Helston's possession? Not that they're there now, of course. He sold 'em for what they will fetch. My money is as good as gone.'

'If I felt sure of that, I'd get it out of his skin.'

'I don't want his skin,' snapped Mr. Signet. 'They may all be hanged together, for what I care.'

He used even a stronger word than 'hanged;' while the comprehensiveness of his 'all'—though, fortunately, Mr. Brail did not know whom it included—was appalling. The most that the detective could extract from his employer was a promise that he would make no overtures to Lady Pargiter without previously communicating with him.

On the second morning came Mr. Barlow's letter from Paris, the contents of which revived Mr. Brail amazingly. They pointed to nothing certain, it is true, but they aroused his flagging interest in the case, just as the whimper of a trusty hound will put heart in the desponding sportsman: they might not kill the fox, but there was an end to 'drawing blank,' at all events. The diamonds were in Paris, at present undisposed of, and every day would render their negotiation more dangerous. Surely Mr. Signet would now entrust him with the commission of gaining possession of them? There would be a difficulty, unless they could be absolutely identified, in getting a warrant for the apprehension of this man Butt, but that could be surmounted. The inexplicable objection that his employer had evinced to the arrest of Helston no longer applied to the case—for Helston had not got

the diamonds, though he had doubtless been their original appropriator. Above all, the discovery of the woman gave Mr. Brail great hopes.

With Mr. Barlow's letter in his hand, he was about to start from his chambers—he occupied a second floor in the lane at the back of the Temple—for Paulet Street, when a telegram was put into his hand. It detailed as succinctly as could be all that had happened at the Hôtel de la Fontaine on the previous night, with a verbatim copy of the note found in the bosom of the murdered girl.

Mr. Brail's first act on the receipt of this astonishing intelligence was characteristic. He telegraphed to a French commissioner of police with whom he was acquainted, that the jewels in possession of the assassin were in all probability the Pargiter diamonds, and laid claim to them in the name of their owner, pending further and more authoritative proceedings.

Then he began to give his attention to the mere matters of life and death. What engaged his deepest attention was, of course, the last message of the murdered girl:

'M. H. is still in Moor—No——starving. For God's——haste.'

Some of the blanks he could easily fill in. 'Matthew Helston is still in Moor Street. No. He is starving. For God's sake, make haste,' was what he made out the message to be. But what did that 'No' mean? If she had found her information as to his whereabouts incorrect, that was surely—making every allowance for haste and fear—not the way in which she would have expressed herself. That 'No,' therefore, doubtless stood for Number; and the missing figures were 10: No. 10 Moor Street being Lady Pargiter's address. If Mr. Signet had been present he would have exclaimed, 'Then, Helston is there after all. I always said that woman was capable of anything!' But Mr. Brail jumped to no such conclusion. He touched a hand-bell, and a sharp-looking Hebrew youth was by his side in an instant.

'Has Brown made his report this morning?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Where is he?'

'Gone home to bed. He lodges in Milford Lane.'

'That is but a stone's-throw. Bring him in ten minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown; if you do it in less time, I'll give you ten shillings.'

We talk of the marvels of electricity, but the attraction of metals for a Jew-boy puts lightning into the shade. In seven minutes Brown was in the room, dishevelled, panting, and in his shirt-sleeves, but still Brown.

'You have been on duty in Moor Street every night since this diamond robbery. Are there any houses in it let in lodgings?'

'Well, there are hotels, sir.'

'Will you answer my question?'

'There are no lodging-houses; it is too fine a place.'

'And all the houses are occupied?'

'Yes, sir. That is, all the furnished houses. There is one, however, unfurnished.'

'What number?'

'Number 11, sir.'

Mr. Brail gave a sudden start; then scratched his leg, as if a flea had bitten him.

'Does any one ever enter it?' he inquired in an indifferent tone.

'Only the caretaker, sir—a shabby, shambling sort of fellow. I've seen him let himself in with a latch-key.'

'Often?'

'Well, yes, sir; every night, mostly.'

'Last night?'

'Well, no, sir; not last night.'

'The night before?'

'Well, no, sir. Now you speak of it, I have not noticed him the last night or two.'

'There's a bill in the window, I suppose?'

'No, sir, there's no bill; the house is let. They were saying so at the public-house.'

'What did they say?'

'Carberrys' man, the house-agents in Bond Street—he was taking a dram the other night—said they had let it a month ago to some gentleman, but they had not seen the colour of his money. I think there's some hitch about it.'

'Perhaps so. That will do. You may go to bed again. Noah, call a growler.'

'Don't you mean a hansom, sir?'

'I think I said a growler. That boy is getting to think for himself,' muttered Mr. Brail, 'which will be his ruin.'

In two minutes the detective was being driven at a rapid rate to Bond Street, in company with two members of the force whom he had picked up from a police-station on his way. It being Christmas-day, the streets were comparatively clear; so that Mr. Brail's suggestion to the driver to 'look alive' could be carried out; but the same circumstance might have proved an obstacle to the detective's wish for speed, if his own character had been less

determined. At Carberrys' there was only one clerk on the premises, and, as he briefly but distinctly informed his visitor, he was not there to do business with any one on Christmas-day. 'So you'll just have to wait for the key of No. 11 Moor Street till to-morrow morning,' was his peroration.

'Very good; it was in mere civility to Carberry that I asked the favour,' returned Mr. Brail. 'It will not take us five minutes to break the door open. Perhaps your employers would prefer that course. I am a detective policeman. Good morning.'

He not only got the house-key on the instant, but a little oil to make it turn softly in the lock; and on they drove.

Moor Street was as silent and dull as usual, and even a trifle duller. Its tenants were mostly in the country, keeping Christmas—or rather, having it kept for them; but No. 11 was by far the dreariest house in the street. It had been empty only a month or two, but signs of neglect, though not of decay, had become already manifest. The shuttered windows were black with dust, and in a less fashionable neighbourhood (where street-boys are allowed) would undoubtedly have been broken. Under the sheltering porch the accumulated mud looked filthier by contrast with the surrounding snow.

Mr. Brail got out first and opened the door; one policeman swiftly followed him, and the other remained in the cab, with his eye on the area steps. If he had been seen outside, and on the watch, there would have been a ten-deep semicircle of spectators round him in as many seconds.

Within No. 11 all was not so neglected as without. Much to their astonishment, the hall was furnished in the ordinary manner, but it struck damp and cold, and, quietly as the two men closed the door behind them, the sound reverberated through the house. With one hasty glance around him Mr. Brail led the way upstairs, exploring room after room, while his companion remained on the landing, lest a rabbit should bolt from the burrow by some second hole. If they spoke to one another it was in whispers, and when they replied it was in monosyllables, or more often by a mere gesture. There was not a living thing to be seen except the spiders; nor was there an article of furniture save, as we have said, in the hall. In the drawing-room, the faded splendours of the ceilings and the carved marble of the mantelpieces rendered the surrounding barrenness still more marked.

Returning to the hall floor, they still found no traces of recent tenancy, and they explored the kitchen and offices with the same result. The caretaker, as Mr. Brown had called him, had either only visited his charge occasionally, or was a man

strangely indifferent, for one of his calling, to his personal comfort.

'There is not a soul in the place,' observed the policeman, speaking above his breath for the first time.

'I am sure I don't know,' returned Mr. Brail coolly. 'We have not tried the cellar.'

The door, which was next the pantry and in the centre of the house, as cellar-doors should be, was locked. Mr. Brail stooped down and examined the jambs and the keyhole. 'This has been opened recently,' he observed coolly. 'Light your lantern and keep your staff handy. Now give me the jemmy.'

In two minutes, by aid of this ingenious instrument, the door was forced open, and discovered a flight of steps leading into darkness. The atmosphere was close and, by comparison with that of the outer air, even warm. They descended the steps, and presently the policeman's bullseye flashed upon a human figure lying on a mattress and wrapped in a railway-rug. His face was white and wan, and his eyes gazed vacantly upon the light and them.

'I thought so!' exclaimed Mr. Brail, allowing himself a momentary gratification at the confirmation of his own astuteness. 'It is the very man.'

'The Butterfly Wing will do it,' murmured the prostrate figure. 'The mistake was in the head of the Nut.'

'The gent is drunk,' observed the policeman, with a shake of the head that suggested something more than reprobation—a pathetic regret that the circumstances did not permit of the other's being taken into custody—'run in.'

'Go to Dr. Creyke, you fool; he lives at No. 6 in the next street; bring him here immediately,' cried Mr. Brail with a contempt that bordered on savagery. Then he knelt down tenderly enough by the side of the mattress, and, pulling a flask from his pocket, applied it to Matthew's lips.

'You shall have soup at Carberrys', my poor fellow, if I make it out of that young man's liver,' he murmured consolingly; 'and then you shall be took home.'





'It is the very man.'

CHAPTER LI.

THE KEY TO THE ENIGMA.

MATTHEW HELSTON had been lying in his own bed in Cavendish Grove for many a day before he got his wits back, much less was able to give any account of his disappearance. If a less skilful man than Dr. Creyke had been sent for by Mr. Brail, or if there had been a few more hours' delay in finding the Lost Man, he would have been found dead.

As it was, the comforts which poor Sabey had provided in her hopings against hope for his reception, 'in case he should have met with some accident or have been taken ill,' and which even Amy had looked upon with tender pity rather than approval, were eminently useful. The hot bath to be prepared at a few minutes' notice—and which was ready by the time he was carried over the threshold—the fire in his room, the beef-tea (for, so long had been his abstinence that no more solid food could be given to him) were all factors, and not unimportant ones, in the slowly worked-out sum of his recovery.

After the first day or two, however, the doctor pronounced the patient out of danger.

'It is now merely a question of time,' he explained to Uncle Stephen, 'or rather, of constitution (which is gaining ground), *versus* exposure, want, and cerebral excitement (the effects of which are vanishing); it is the last which will remain the longest, and is the least explicable.'

'Gad, I think it's explained easily enough,' said Mr. Durham. 'To be locked up in defiance of the *Habeas Corpus* Act for three weeks in a cellar is enough to "cerebrally excite" a saint.'

'It is not that, sir,' said the doctor coolly (he had a very grey head and shaggy white eyebrows, from which, combined with his long standing in the profession, he had obtained the sobriquet of 'Nestor Creyke,' and he treated all the world as his grandchildren). 'He has not been suffering from mental irritation, as you imagine; he has not been thinking even of getting out of his place of confinement; his symptoms are the same with those I have observed in a patient of mine who has devoted himself too exclusively to weighing the sun on an empty stomach.'

Uncle Stephen, who was as yet by no means himself again, permitted himself a quiet smile, but said nothing. After what had occurred, he thought it generally advisable to say very little. Most gentlemen of his age and reputation would have deeply re-

sented the complete and utter failure of his own forebodings, but for his part he was only ashamed of them. When Sabey came every morning to her half-opened door to give him a kiss—which was all he saw of her, for she never left her husband, day or night—he felt that he was obtaining it under false pretences. How would she feel towards him, he wondered, when she came to hear from his own lips—for he was resolved to tell her—that he had been a traitor to Matthew, not at heart, indeed, but in his too logical mind?

On the second day of Matthew's return Mr. Helston the elder, who had in the interim very thoughtfully absented himself, leaving the little household to take uninterrupted charge of its sick man, dropped in to dinner. He seemed to take it for granted that bygones were bygones—indeed, that he, in fact, had been the person aggrieved—and that it was out of the question that he should be otherwise than welcome. After earnest inquiries as to the health of his nephew, he proceeded to unburden his mind upon a matter with which it appeared to have been much exercised.

'Who, may I ask,' inquired he, 'is Mr. Frank Barlow?'

Poor Amy turned scarlet; but Uncle Stephen answered calmly, 'A very kind and honest fellow, who lives next door to us.'

'Ah, a friend of the family, I presume,' said Mr. Helston, 'though I never heard of him. Well, that explains what I should otherwise consider a most infernal piece of impertinence. When I left you yesterday I drove straight to Stork's, Q.C., who had gone to spend the day at his club. His clerk said it would be as good as his place was worth to send to him there on business; so I called this morning (when, by the by, he apologised very politely, saying that, as a family man, he made a point of spending his Christmas-day in complete domesticity).

"Well," said I, "there is no hurry in the matter I called about; only, I wished for certain to secure your services in an action for libel which will at once be instituted by a nephew of mine against one Lady Pargiter."

"Now, that's curious," he said; "for I am retained in that affair already."

"What! for the defence? By that woman?"

"No; for the prosecution. I got a telegram from Paris last night, from your nephew's attorney, Mr. Frank Barlow."

"The deuce you have!" said I. "I didn't even know he had an attorney. I thought I had been pretty quick in securing Stork; and also, as Matthew's uncle, I think I might have been trusted to do it."

'But Mr. Barlow didn't know you were in town,' observed

Uncle Stephen conciliatingly; 'nor even—dear me! how should he?'

'I see; you mean that there was no reason to trust to me before yesterday,' returned the old man drily. 'Well, perhaps not. But this young fellow—Stork told me he was quite young—must be a deuced sharp practitioner.'

'Mr. Barlow is a very intelligent man,' observed Uncle Stephen, taking care to avert his eyes from Amy, 'and to his astuteness and good will, as Mr. Brail told me yesterday, it is solely owing that our nephew is still alive. He went over to Paris and discovered in twenty-four hours where poor Matthew was. *How* he got there we don't know even now, but he was starving. Brail's view is that the man who shut him up there, whoever he was, had become savage because he couldn't sell the diamonds, and had cut off his supplies of food. It's one of the most abominable cases that were ever heard of. However, the villain has been arrested for the murder of somebody else by the French police.'

'Then they will be sure to discover extenuating circumstances,' put in Mr. Helston. 'However,' he added, rubbing his hands, 'my Lady Pargiter, who called my nephew a thief, is, thank Heaven, in England. We shall trounce *her*.'

'Oh, Mr. Helston,' cried Amy, 'do not let us think of revenge and retribution now; let us only be thankful! If you could but see poor Sabey!—her heart has no room for aught but gratitude to Heaven for having sent her back her Lost One, even though he looks so ill and pale and weak.'

'My dear young lady,' observed Mr. Helston coolly, 'I hope he will *look* all that for some time to come, however rapid may be his recovery. His appearance in court under such circumstances will be worth an extra thousand pounds. One of the things to live for will be to hear Stork's address to the jury.'

There never was a warmer partisan than Roger Helston, nor one who took a greater delight in fighting.

There was fighting now, although at present of a desultory character, 'all along the line,' as regarded the 'Great Moor Street Mystery,' as it was called. Although Mr. Barlow, on the instant of receiving news from the detective of Matthew's discovery, had taken action, as we have seen, on his behalf, his innocence was by no means established in other quarters. The conviction of it did not strike even Mr. Signet with the force with which it struck Mr. Barlow; while Lady Pargiter, still without her diamonds, was quite as ready to believe Helston had taken them as ever. It was true that he had been found imprisoned, and under circumstances of some discomfort, but that might have

arisen from a quarrel between him and his confederates over the spoil. Not one jot did she abate of her confident virulence against both him and his employer, which the latter met with defiance, indeed, but a little secret misgiving. For, even supposing Helston had no hand in abstracting the jewels, if they had been taken from him by force after they had been handed to him by Lady Pargiter, the jeweller would be equally responsible; if they were really proved to be in Paris, he felt that the mere absence of Matthew's receipt for them would not invalidate her ladyship's claim.

As for Mr. Brail, as became a man of his prudence and profession, he 'kept his mind open' until the following circumstance dropped into it and filled up the aperture.

On the second night after the discovery of Matthew Helston a certain shambling figure might have been seen furtively making its way up Moor Street till it reached No. 11, and in fact *was* seen by one who recognised it, as with trembling fingers it was endeavouring to fit the latch-key into the door of the empty house. Mr. Brown, who was still on duty (in case of this very contingency, impossible though it might have seemed), arrested it.

'Don't'ee, don't'ee,' it pleaded piteously; 'I've only brought some bread and meat to eat upon the doorstep.'

'Uncommon nice place for a picnic,' observed Mr. Brown drily. 'You opened the door, I suppose, for ventilation?'

Solomon himself would have found it difficult to reply to this question satisfactorily. Mr. Richard Dartmoor (for he it was) felt it to be unanswerable, and took refuge in physiological phenomena. 'When a man has had "the jumps" for a day or two he don't know rightly where he lives, but goes about trying doors.'

'I see,' said Mr. Brown, taking possession of the latch-key. 'I shall have great pleasure in seeing you home.'

And he took him to the police-station.

In saying that he had been suffering from 'the jumps' (an unscientific term for *delirium tremens*) Mr. Dartmoor had for once told the truth; and, what was still more extraordinary, he had been caught in the commission of what was (comparatively speaking) a good action; though, in consequence of his late malady, and the alarm consequent upon his apprehension, it was some days before he could explain matters.

On his failure to enlist John Rutherford in Captain Langton's designs for carrying off the Pargiter diamonds, that gentleman had been compelled to turn his thoughts to some other scheme for accomplishing his purpose. And this was the ingenious device the Captain had hit upon.

No. 11 Moor Street was rather an ambitious residence for a gentleman who lived upon his wits to take in hand, but nevertheless he did so; though his delay in completing the preliminaries was so considerable that, as we have seen, it aroused the suspicions of Messrs. Carberry. He had no intention, however, of furnishing the mansion, which he only required for temporary purposes. Its attraction for him—though not a sentimental one—lay in its being next door to Lady Pargiter's. Not once, nor twice, but often, on his return in early winter mornings from 'the Frobisher' or other of his favourite haunts, had he mistaken—not through drunkenness, for he never drank, but from fatigue, the darkness of the night, rain, snow, and other causes—his own modest-looking lodging-house for another of the same pattern. The circumstance might have happened to every man, and might happen, he justly reasoned, again. Only, to make it happen in the particular case he had in his mind he took extraordinary precautions. He furnished the hall of No. 11 exactly as the hall next door was furnished, of which he took care to make a personal observation. Besides Mr. Dartmoor, he had two other assistants in his pay, and these he caused to be attired in the self-same livery—canary trimmed with silver lace—worn by the servants of Lady Pargiter. In this world, unhappily, no plan can be devised that shall be totally independent of 'happy chance' for its success; and more than once had all Captain Langton's preparations been made in vain. Twice had Matthew Helston driven away in his cab with the diamonds according to expectation, but on each occasion one or other of Lady Pargiter's tall footmen had been standing at the door watching the weather, or in rapt admiration of the stars, until the cab had turned the corner of the street, and the Captain's opportunity was lost. But the third time Fate relented and even played into his hands.

The night, as we know, on which Matthew Helston disappeared was an exceptionally tempestuous one. The sky was starless, the wind was roaring, and the snow was falling heavily; a sort of night when in the country it is said 'one cannot see one's hand,' and when in town the flickering gas affords but untrustworthy guidance. No sooner had Matthew left the portico of No. 10 than the footman slammed the door behind him to keep out the sleet and snow. Then came the Captain's opportunity. John Rutherford had not driven twenty yards when the same footman (to all appearance) appeared at his side, having been sent, he said, by his mistress's orders, to bring Mr. Helston back again—something had been forgotten, or at all events his presence was imperatively desired, Matthew was surprised, no doubt; but the cabman was only

disgusted. With the wind and snow full in his face, he drove back to the open door (as it seemed) he had just quitted: the lights and the liveries flashed on his dazzled eyes, and then the door closed upon his fare—who was lying gagged and bound behind it.

In a minute more the footman appeared with that message from his mistress with which we are acquainted, and which informed honest John that his employer had accepted Lady Pargiter's hospitality for the night. He drove off nothing loath to go straight home instead of to Paulet Street, and in the full conviction that he had left Matthew Helston at No. 10.

It was by no means Captain Langton's object to kill his prisoner; not that, from any moral consideration, he was one to 'draw the line' at murder, but because he knew that the law, which is so marvellously indifferent to other crimes against the person (as compared with those against property), does draw the line there. Nay, notwithstanding what had been stated to Captain Langton's own disparagement in the way of nautical crime, the law does take some sort of cognisance of murder even at sea. About murder on land it is still more punctilious, and the Captain prudently refrained from irritating its susceptibilities by shedding blood. His intention was to keep his man in close confinement, in a place where nobody would think of looking for him, till the diamonds of which he had been robbed should be disposed of: and this last enterprise he took into his own hands.

Within half an hour after his victim was secured, the jewels were in the Captain's lodgings, and he had shown himself at 'the Frobisher,' where many of the company, no doubt, thought he had been the whole evening. It would not have been difficult, in short, had circumstances required it, for him to have established an *alibi*. Some people—and especially when it is an important matter—can only think of one thing at a time; but this was not the case with the Captain. It was his habit, whenever it could be accomplished (as at dummy whist), to kill two birds with one stone, and he had another object in his eye even when it was fixed on the Pargiter diamonds. When Phœbe Mayson parted company with Major Lovell she fell low indeed, but never quite so low as, in her self-humiliation and abasement, she had described herself to have done to Mr. Barlow. After her chance meeting with Matthew Helston, she had striven to live a virtuous life; a difficult task, indeed, for one who has fallen and is without the means of livelihood. It was during this period of well-nigh hopeless struggle that she had resided in Bleak Street and had become acquainted with Langton. She made no secret of her past nor of her good resolutions for the

future, and he was certainly not the man to shake them. She had probably never entertained any feeling towards him warmer than indifference. That is the relation, however, in which many—and much more respectable—young persons find themselves with respect to their future husbands—and for her there was a great excuse; marriage in her case meant, or appeared to do so, salvation. Imagine what her life must have been as the debtor of that Bleak Street lodging-house keeper!

As to Langton, he was a married man, though, to do him justice, had he been a bachelor he would have sacrificed himself at the altar all the same rather than have been baulked of his fancy. When he coveted anything, he never put to himself the question, 'Is it right?' (he would have considered that to have been a metaphysical absurdity), but, 'Can I be punished for acquiring it, and how much?' To one who had just robbed and kidnapped a fellow-creature, bigamy seemed a venial offence—that is to say, it would entail no worse penalties than those he had already incurred. How he went through the form of marriage with the girl, and took her to Paris, and what came of it, we know. What happened on the night of the murder we do not know; but it is probable that, from the vehemence of her accusations, he made a shrewd guess at the old relation between her and Matthew, and, incensed in his turn, described Helston to her (to spite her) as being in even a worse plight than he imagined him to be. There was no evidence that Langton meant to starve his victim. Mr. Richard Dartmoor had had, indeed, instructions to provide him nightly with a sufficiency of food, and to telegraph the state of matters in Moor Street to his employer every morning. Only, having given way to the seductions of liquor, 'the jumps' had seized him, and caused an intermittence in his visits to No. 11 that had been well-nigh fatal.

CHAPTER LII.

GATHERED THREADS.

It was on New Year's Day that Matthew Helston recovered speech and gladdened Sabey's heart with that first feeble utterance more than any bird in springtime gladdens his fond mate with a full tide of song. He had recognised her long before, but had been content to lie with his wasted hand in hers and his eyes fixed upon the loving face that could never gaze enough upon him.

'Baby—Amy—Uncle Stephen—Frank'—she had now mentioned every name that was dear to him by turn, and she had as-

sured him all were well. Then he murmured something which even her quick ear could not catch ; but it sounded like 'Butterfly—Nut.' This gave her a pang of terror, since it surely showed that his mind was still astray. Since he repeated it, however, with fretful persistence, she sent for Amy.

'It must be something mechanical,' was her verdict. 'A nut is the head of a screw. Has it anything to do with Madge, Matthew?' she whispered softly.

To see the light leap up in his weary eyes was like beholding a resurrection. There was no doubt of its having to do with Madge. So, with the doctor's permission, she was brought upstairs and placed by the bedside of the patient. When he saw how bright and clean she was, he looked up in his wife's face with a grateful smile that would have repaid a lifetime of oil-and-feather work.

'Of course I looked after Madge,' she murmured simply, 'when her master was away.'

Having contrived to express to the two women that if the nut on a certain screw were shaped like a butterfly, motion would be imparted to the machine, Matthew insisted upon Uncle Stephen being sent for to hear the news of that great discovery.

'I am so happy, dear uncle,' he said.

'You deserve to be so, my good boy,' answered the old man with emotion—'if, at least, there is any truth in the theory of—compensation.'

Matthew shook his head.

'It is not the compensation-balance at all,' he said ; 'the nut itself forms the fly.'

'I see,' said Uncle Stephen, though he didn't.

'It was the one thing (though sometimes the cellar was too full of flying Madges) that kept me up in my prison,' murmured Matthew. 'Whenever I thought of Sabey and the little one I sank gravewards.'

Then they understood how that, in the silence and solitude of his prison, he had thought out the problem of imparting motion to Madge, and thereby banished the despairing thoughts and longings which would otherwise have destroyed him.

'To be once more with you all is heaven itself,' he whispered ; 'but next to that——' And again he murmured the name of his invention. 'Oh, I am so happy, and so well content!'

Uncle Stephen's face bore the old grave and pitying smile that so well became it.

'You think so, my boy, but you will never be content till you have found out three things—the square of the circle, the key of the Pyramid of Cheops, and the value of the number seven.'

'There is something in that,' admitted Matthew, with an answering smile. Then he asked for Frank; and there was silence.

'He is not ill?' he continued with anxiety. 'You told me he was well; where is Frank, Amy?'

Sabey answered for her, 'He returns from Paris to-day, and will be here this evening.'

It would have been of no use for Amy to have said 'No' when Matthew had asked for him. If he had asked for Mr. Signet or for Lady Pargiter, Sabey would have said, 'They shall be here,' and got them somehow.

When Mr. Barlow did come, Sabey had the first hug of him in the parlour—for had he not saved her husband's life?—and Amy the second.

'Can you ever forgive me, Frank?' she sobbed.

'It is I who need forgiveness,' he said simply.

'And I,' put in Uncle Stephen so meekly and so softly that Sabey did not hear him.

Amy cast such a look of earnest entreaty at him that his appeal was not repeated. He had satisfied his conscience by thus acknowledging his want of faith in Sabey's presence and before witnesses; and, since she had taken no notice of it, so much the better. He had neither the will nor the courage to make confession a second time. Sabey never knew that either Uncle Stephen or Mr. Barlow had ever lacked faith for a moment in Matthew's innocence; which, I am inclined to think, was fortunate. Once, in alluding to their past miseries, she admitted to Uncle Stephen that the recollection of them would remain with her for ever. 'There are some things,' she said, 'which one can never forget.'

'Things are so different with me,' returned the old gentleman his dry way: '*I* forget everything.'

But, notwithstanding his lightness of speech, he had never congratulated himself more sincerely upon his reticence in a certain matter than on that occasion.

Matthew, on the other hand, was told 'all about it;' and he at once allowed that, with the facts they had before them, no men could have come to any other conclusion than that which had been so unwillingly arrived at by Mr. Durham and Mr. Barlow.

'Yet Sabey and Amy both believed in you, Matt,' said Uncle Stephen remorsefully.

'That's because they are women and without logical minds,' explained Matthew cheerfully. 'But we don't love them less upon that account, mind you.'

If Matthew Helston had been slow to put lance in rest in defence of the fair sex, he would have been ingrate and recreant

indeed. It is probable that, since Mahomet's time, no two women had ever shown more faith in one man than Sabey and Amy had done in his case; for though they were unaware until afterwards of that little episode which seemed to connect his absence with Phœbe Mayson, it is my opinion that, if they had known it, it would not have made one pennyworth of difference in their view of matters. Facts may be stubborn things, but a woman's trust with love to back it is like iron with teak behind it.

It was not without some difficulty that Mr. Barlow got away from Paris to eat his New Year's dinner in Cavendish Grove, since of course the police had need of him in connection with the murder of poor Phœbe. He had doubted in his own mind as to whether he should tell Major Lovell who it was that he had seen lying dead that Christmas morning in the foreign city which had not held for her one single friend; or whose hand had done the deed; nor was it, certainly, with any view of arousing his remorse or marring his butterfly pleasures that he did so; but, in his ignorance of the laws and customs of the country in which he found himself, he feared lest there should be some miscarriage of justice in the matter, and therefore appealed to the Major for advice. The manner in which that gentleman received his views astonished him not a little. He had anticipated a gentlemanly expression of regret at most; he had struck a match merely to light, as it were, an ornamental *bougie*—and found he had fired a powder magazine.

'Phœbe—murdered—and by that damnable scoundrel!'

His languid manners were thrown off with his velvet coat at once; and, what surprised Mr. Barlow more than all, he insisted on going to see the murdered woman.

He came back greatly agitated, and for the time (the effect lasted a week, perhaps) quite a different man. 'It was I who killed her, Mr. Barlow,' he exclaimed with bitter self-reproach, 'though that villain struck the blow.' His passion against the criminal was terrible to witness. 'If the law fails in its duty, as I am a living man I will not fail in mine.' And, indeed, if Captain Langton had slipped through the fingers of Justice, he would without doubt have found himself in those of another avenger. 'If money is wanted, Mr. Barlow,' added the Major simply, 'there's two hundred pounds, which, thank Heaven, I won at the *cercle* last night.'

However, as it happened, though he saved his head—*parce que le pauvre homme était jaloux*, it seemed—the Captain went to the galleys for life.

The diamonds were found in his possession; and, what was very curious, and showed the extreme audacity of the man, the very

case itself; indeed, he had only taken three of the jewels out of their setting. The 500*l.* reward for their recovery Mr. Signet paid without a murmur; but the similar sum offered by Lady Pargiter for Matthew's apprehension was, as Mr. Brail described it, rather a tooth-drawer for that lady. He had only discovered for her, you see, a prosecutor in an action for libel.

The jewels, however, were, of course, handed over to her. Matthew acknowledged that he had received them from her and had given her a receipt; the reason of her non-production of which was peculiar. On the night of his disappearance Lady Pargiter, on her return from the ball, had found a note awaiting her from a high official personage which had given her great dissatisfaction. It had been her desire to be invited to a certain entertainment given by Royalty itself, and for which she had intrigued and laboured with even more than her usual pertinacity. And the official personage had replied finally, though in the politest terms, in the negative. No wonder Matthew congratulated himself that night (little knowing to what he was doomed) that it was the last time he would stand in her ladyship's presence and listen to her harsh and insulting tones. After his departure, and a few minutes passed in snarling at her maid, she had in a gust of passion—or perhaps for fear her humiliation should become known—snatched up the official note from the dressing-table and flung it into the fire. Only, instead of the note, she burnt the receipt for the diamonds which lay by its side! She discovered her mistake in an instant, and despatched Patty Selwood to bid the footman run after the cab. If he had been five minutes earlier he would have seen it coming back—with a facsimile of his canary-coloured self running by its side—to deposit its occupant at No. 11. As it was, he only saw an empty street. The absence of the receipt, though it made her ladyship 'fidgety,' seemed of small consequence at the moment; but the next morning, when the disappearance of Matthew became known, it of course assumed immense importance. Thereupon ensued the course of duplicity upon Lady Pargiter's part with which we are acquainted, and which justly exposed her to such grave suspicions; and, on the other hand, her partial betrayal by Patty Selwood, whom cunning and hate combined had taught exactly how much to say.

Nor did Lady Pargiter's punishment end here. After Mr. Brail had got his money, he thought it his duty to acquaint her with the fact that her family diamonds had been pronounced by the French experts to be made of paste (and, indeed, it was for attempting to dispose of them as real ones that Captain Langton had got into trouble). Her incredulity, of course, was extreme,

and was expressed with characteristic vehemence ; but the fact was as the detective had stated.

‘For one table and *the picture in it*,’ observed Uncle Stephen, in reference to the comparative value of the morocco case, ‘King Attalus gave Aristocles the Theban a hundred talents in silver.’

When convinced of her misfortune, her ladyship accused Mr. Signet of having substituted paste for her diamonds ; but I am glad to say that that gentleman’s innocence of any such fraud was fully established. The Pargiter *parure* had been composed of genuine stones at one time, when Mr. Ingot, her ladyship’s father, had endeavoured to dispose of them to the jeweller ; and of course Mr. Signet had taken for granted that they were the same he had already valued and approved, though he had refused to give Mr. Ingot’s price for them. That worthy money-lender had disposed of them, however, before his death, and caused the counterfeits to be made. He concluded that their genuineness would never be questioned ; that they would remain an heirloom in his family for ever ; and if (as actually happened) some jeweller, as indeed he had recommended, should be made responsible for them, and they should be stolen while in his possession, what a good stroke of business it would be for his daughter and heiress to receive 25,000*l.* of compensation for the loss of what was in reality worth about a hundred pounds ! Unhappily, things turned out somewhat contrary to this astute gentleman’s expectations.

Could aught have touched him there below,
If aught of things that here befall
Could move him where he was at all,

I don’t think the well-meaning old gentleman would have been pleased to hear what his daughter said of him when these circumstances came to light.

Let us have done with her, and rise from our tale with a sweeter taste in our mouth than that of harshness, pride, and greed.

CHAPTER LIII.

CONCLUSION.

THOUGH Lady Pargiter was herself merciless, she was the cause of mercy in others (which, perhaps, may be the reason, otherwise inexplicable, why such people are permitted to exist). Taking into account what she had suffered, and how the sparkling pride of her life had, as in a fairy tale, been changed into a handful of worthless pebbles, Matthew Helston withdrew from the prosecution of her ladyship for malicious libel. So strongly, however,

was Uncle Roger for going on with it, that it would, perhaps, have been proceeded with but for Sabey's opposition.

'Pray, pray let us have peace,' she said; 'God has been so good to us; let us not persecute any creature He has made.'

'Prosecute, prosecute,' suggested Mr. Barlow, in gentle defence of the methods of legal procedure; but Sabey had made no mistake in what she meant to say, and carried her point.

There was nothing now, indeed, which, having once resolved upon, she failed to carry. She was the captain of the ship, and Amy the most efficient of first lieutenants. Matthew, as we know, had never aspired to domestic rule; and Uncle Stephen and Mr. Barlow had become her slaves. They felt that they could never make her reparation enough for a certain offence of the commission of which she remained ignorant to her dying day.

Uncle Roger, disenchanted of Cousin Dick, and earnestly desirous of a reconciliation with his only nephew, perceived that the shortest and surest way to it was through the good offices of his wife, and thus completed the sum of her subjects. He had counted on getting Matthew back to Latbury as his partner, and flattered himself, indeed, that he would have 'jumped at the offer.' He declined it, or rather Sabey declined it for him, with the most gracious thanks. 'My husband is a man of genius,' she said, 'but it does not lie in the legal direction. He is the inventor of the Butterfly Nut.'

'Confound that Madge!' muttered Uncle Roger (we may be sure, inaudibly), and complained most bitterly of his disappointment to Mr. Durham. 'It would serve Matthew right,' he said, 'if I left all my money to a hospital.'

'Very likely, my dear sir,' replied Uncle Stephen; 'only, nobody is served right in this world.'

'But what if I mean to do it, sir?' returned the old gentleman irascibly.

'Then it's quite certain not to happen,' was the quiet reply. 'Nothing does happen—it is not *my* remark—except the Unexpected. I used to think Matthew the most unlucky man in the world. He reminded one of Thomas Tusser, who spread his bread with all sorts of butter, and none of it would stick; yet see what a fortune he is making out of Madge after all.'

'But he was all wrong about her; he can't make her move an inch.'

'Of course not. If he did that, my theory would be established beyond all question. But though the Butterfly Nut failed there, the principle of the flying screw has been established by it. He could have ten thousand pounds for the patent to-morrow. Look

at the Pargiter diamonds—paste! Look at John Rutherford, supposed to have lied more than Charles the Ninth or the Duke of Gloucester, yet who stated the facts as he believed them.'

'A nasty poaching vagabond,' argued Uncle Roger, 'who, Mr. Brail says, had meant to kill Matthew with a pistol, on his own account.'

'That is another mistake, my dear sir. He bought the pistol to defend him against the designs of Dartmoor. We have heard all about it from the man's own lips.'

'Then why didn't he tell us about Dartmoor's designs?'

'Well, that again is curious. Rutherford is a man of his word (another example of the unexpected in a cabman, by the way), and had promised not to betray them; and as he was quite certain in his own mind (and therefore wrong, of course) that he had left Matthew at Lady Pargiter's, and that consequently Dartmoor could have had no hand in his disappearance, he held his tongue. Then, again, can anything—between ourselves—have been more unexpected than the conduct of our friend Mr. Barlow? I confess I used to think but very little of him.'

'A devilish sharp young fellow,' put in Uncle Roger.

Uncle Stephen shrugged his shoulders. 'Possibly; sharp but narrow, like a needle—no head. Well, see how nobly he has come out of all this. But for him, our Matthew would have been lost to us.'

'True,' answered Uncle Roger; 'I am indebted to him for that.'

'Notwithstanding the hospital,' put in the other slyly.

'Bother the hospital, sir! I shall give Barlow my London business.'

It was really astonishing how that visit to Paris had developed Mr. Barlow's character. Of course it was not the mere going abroad—for there is no evidence that Mr. Cook's excursionists are intellectually any the better for that—but the experience of life that had been opened up to him. It had evoked all sorts of qualities and feelings at the existence of which in him only one person in the world had guessed. In short, at bottom he was worthy of her.

Before Amy married him he had become as a brother of his blood to Matthew; for had he not seen poor Phoebe at the very last and done his best to avenge her? Sabey, of course, knew all about it, and sympathised with him as only a good woman can with a rival—who is dead. Matthew did not talk much of his unhappy first love; but he thought about her a good deal—always tenderly, purely, and with gratitude. It was curious, and went to confirm

Uncle Stephen's theory, that the nature of this man, so reticent and unsocial, should have been so thoroughly known and appreciated by three women; two of whom may be said to have lived for him, and one to have died for him.

It may be taken for granted that when a man is beloved—in honest fashion—by more than one woman, he is deserving of love.

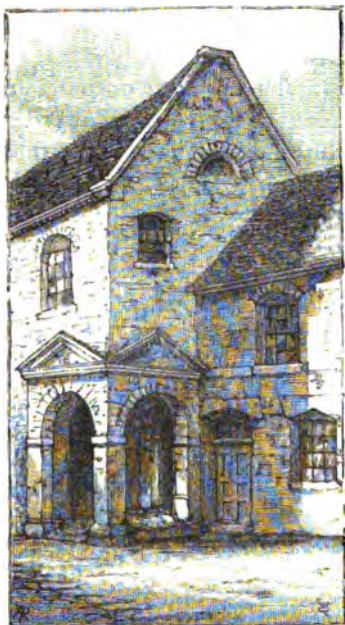
As to Uncle Stephen and Uncle Roger, I don't know which idolised their nephew most; and in one case at least it was quite independent of his success in the world. The success, however, had, I think, some influence upon his own character; it unconsciously expanded under it in a genial and wholesome way, like a flower that, after a long winter, feels the kiss of the sun. He had no more disappointments, and only one regret. Yet, after all, was it not better even for poor Phœbe herself that she was dead?

In the same desk in which had been discovered that memorandum of his tender forethought for her, there was now a scrap of paper, torn and bloodstained, on which were scrawled the words that had saved Matthew's life; and on them—it is no dishonour to his manhood to confess it—he never looked without a tear.

(The End.)

Our Old Country Towns.

XII.



Old Porch at Hawarden Village.

THERE are many small country towns that can hardly be regarded as above the rank of villages, and yet they are full of interest, and abound with historical associations. Among these, certainly, we may place Hawarden (pronounced Har-den), which is celebrated not only as the residence of Mr. W. E. Gladstone, but for its charming surroundings. It lies on the roads between Chester, Hawarden, and Mold, and is not nearly so much visited as it would be if its beauties were more fully known. The highway which skirts the left bank of the river Dee overlooks the beautiful fields of Wirral, and the estuaries of the Mersey and the Dee are plainly visible. If we stop at what is called Queen's Ferry or King's Ferry, ac-

According to the reigning monarch, and take a straight road on the left-hand side, we arrive, in half-an-hour's walk, at the beautiful village or country town of Hawarden. The gates of Hawarden Castle are actually on the main street, and the village runs along the side of the park walls for fully half a mile. It is not at all unlike an old-fashioned French town, such as we see if we leave the banks of the Loire or the Meuse, and wander for a mile or two in the country. There is a curious circumstance connected with Hawarden Castle that is not commonly known, and which singularly connects the Gladstone family, who now own it, with the Crown. William I. included it in a grant to his nephew, Hugh Lupus, and it was held by his successors under the name of Earl of Chester, and afterwards subordinately by the barons of Montalt, until it was resumed by the Crown, along with the title of Earl of Chester. Henry VI. granted it to Sir Thomas Stanley, and the house of Stanley held it until it was forfeited again to

the Crown, when James, Earl of Derby, was taken after the battle of Worcester and beheaded at Bolton. Cromwell sold it for some nominal sum to Serjeant Glynne, and it remained in his family till the sudden death of Sir Stephen Glynne in London, when it passed to his sister, Mrs. W. E. Gladstone. There are the remains of the original castle in the beautiful park. By the removal of vast heaps of rubbish, the previous form of the structure, which was pentagonal, has been discovered. At one angle was the keep—a lofty circular tower—which is still nearly entire; and from its summit are splendid views of the surrounding



Hawarden Village.

country, and the Vale Royal of Cheshire. Hawarden rectory is one of the richest in England, being estimated at more than 4,000*l.* a year, and has always been an appanage of Hawarden Castle. The church is not very large, but it is irregular and picturesque, and from the churchyard may be seen one of the most beautiful views in England. The estuary of the Dee is like a lake when the tide is high, and almost every acre in the great district of Wirral—which is the name given to the isthmus of Cheshire that is bounded by the estuaries of the Mersey and the Dee—is stretched out before our view. The architectural feature which figures at the beginning of this chapter is very curious, and almost unique in England. The house, as it were, strides past its neighbours, and

forms a porch in its stride. There is a comfortable shelter below, and the space above is utilised for a room.

The country town of Hawarden is very pleasing, and, like other places where there is a great house, there are many excellent dwellings on the outskirts of each end. The road that runs through it is very wide and commodious, and there are one or two quaint signs hanging out, and supported by wrought iron of excellent design and work. It has seen some troublous times in days of old. The advanced guard of the sagacious Henry II. marched through it, commanded by the king himself, to encounter David and Conan, the heroic sons of Owen Gwynedd, and the encounter took place very near here. About two miles from Hawarden is a thickly-wooded dell, which a traveller might easily pass by without remarking; indeed, it is not very readily found, even if we are in quest of it. In this dell is a very interesting ruin, thickly mantled with ivy, which bears the name of Ewloe Castle. Hardly anything is known of its history, or even with certainty who its founder was; but it probably was a rendezvous for the forces of the Welsh patriots. They drew the English army, which was under the personal command of Henry Plantagenet, the conqueror of Ireland, into a defile which is a continuation of the dell where Ewloe Castle stands, and routed it with dreadful slaughter. The little stream that flows past this ancient castle is called Wepre brook, and it runs through the wood called Coed Ewloe. Flint Castle was a near point for supports, and doubtless was in commission. I could hardly recommend any stranger to these regions to make a visit to Flint. It lies in a country of unsurpassed beauty; but for some reason or other, though its surroundings have always been prosperous, the county town is squalid; and though the castle abounds with interest, it is so indifferently kept that I could not find any scene in the ancient place I should wish to be responsible for recommending a tourist to make a pilgrimage to examine. There is one old town here, Holywell, that no one who is in the vicinity should neglect to visit. There are several picturesque views in it, though mills have rather modernised some parts of it; but the chief interest centres in the beautiful chapel that has been built over the well. The well stands in a great groined canopy, with finely-moulded ribs and excellently well carved bosses, and over it is the chapel. The mouldings in the windows of the chapel, and the small shafts, are of exquisite design. The well is fed by a cool spring of singular brightness, and is twelve feet long, seven feet wide, and five feet deep. The cool crystal water never alters in temperature, either in summer or winter; and it is so clear that the smallest objects

are as visible at the bottom as if no water intervened. The copious supply is not affected by the heaviest rains or the longest droughts, and it is estimated by Pennant that twenty-four tons per minute are continually flowing. In case this does not convey at first an adequate idea of the immense volume that runs to waste, it may be said that it would supply two towns of half a million inhabitants each with twenty gallons of water daily for every inhabitant. Of course, the well can boast of a miraculous origin among the simple inhabitants.

About the beginning of the seventh century, Prince Caradoc was greatly smitten with the attractions of Winefred, who was a devout young lady of high respectability, but who refused—rightly, as events proved—to return his attentions. She fled away on account of his power, and he followed her from hamlet to hamlet until he fell in with her at Holywell, and then he renewed his unsuccessful proposals; and, on receiving another refusal, he drew his sword and struck off her beautiful head, which rolled down the hill and stopped at the present well: water at once gushed out, and its properties were miraculous. Winefred was related to the family of St. Beuno, and he at once entered an appearance, and simply annihilated Caradoc, who was never beheld again; and then, reverently taking up the head, he carried it to the body and joined it on again so deftly, that only a thin white slender line was left to show the work of her impetuous admirer.

A singular custom prevails at Holywell. Owing to the situation of the church, the bell is almost inaudible in some parts of the town, and a man is employed to go through the streets every Sunday with a large bell suspended by a strap from his shoulders, and a cushion buckled round one knee; as he walks, his knee strikes the bell, and so he is converted into a sort of walking belfry. The spring at St. Winefred's is naturally endowed with miraculous qualities: the moss that grows near it is fragrant, and the stones to the present day are stained with blood. All this the inhabitants are quite ready to show a stranger, though he will hardly agree with them as to the cause. In the fragrant moss he will recognise the *Jungermannia asplenoides*, and in the blood-stain on the pebbles he is disillusioned by finding another production of the vegetable kingdom—the *Lepraria iolithus*. The chapel and the groined roof over the well are said to have been built by the Countess of Richmond, the mother of Henry VII. Mr. Grose considers the style to have been earlier; but it would be easy to find many buildings in England that correspond in style with this, and are known to have been built at about the same period as tradition assigned to St. Winefred's. The fortified

Welsh towns, such as Conway or Caernarvon, are quite peculiar; and the castles differ in every respect from those we see on the Rhine or Moselle. They are vast royal fortresses, with little towns clustering round their massive walls, and often contain groups of architecture of great beauty. I cannot agree with the description of Conway that Pennant gives, when he says: 'A more ragged town I hardly ever saw from within, nor a more beautiful one from without.' There are some very singular old houses; and one especially, called the 'Plas Mawr,' is a grand old specimen of Elizabethan architecture. Nobody can fail to be struck with the picturesque view of the castle from the corner of High Street and



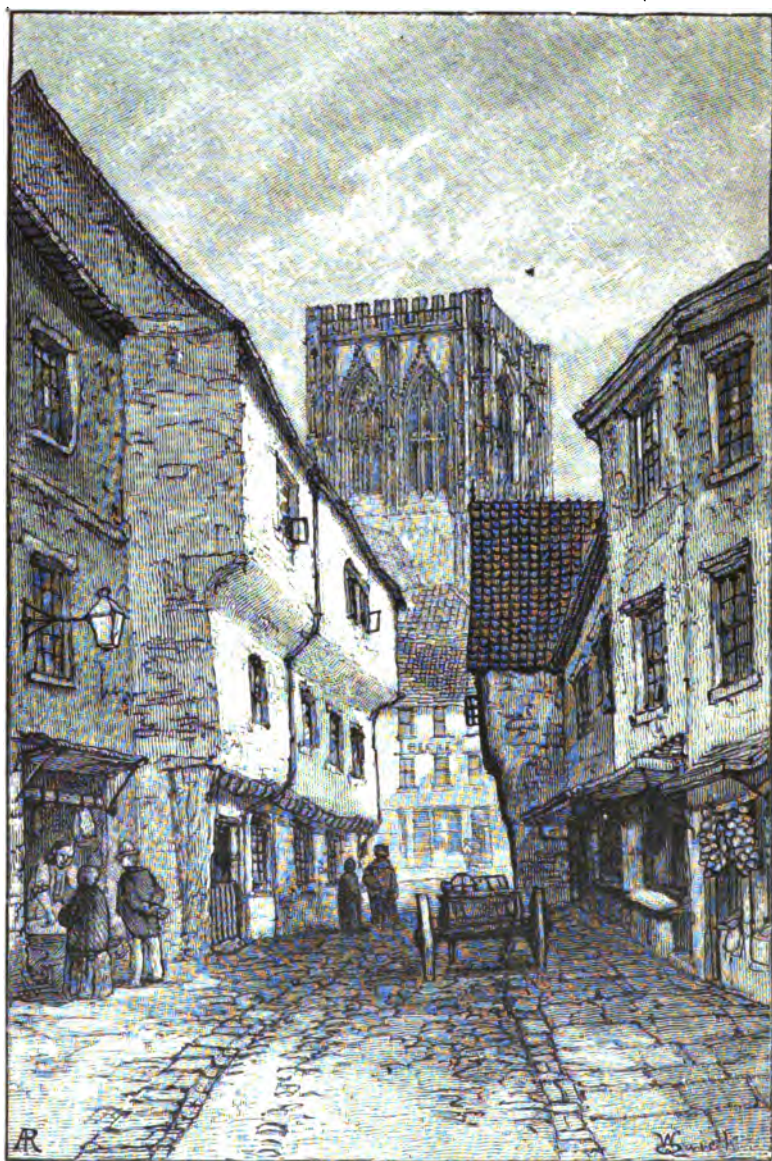
Castle Inn, Cambridge.

Castle Street, and the fine line of old houses that run up to it, and seem to combine so well with the architecture of the overshadowing fortress.

In taking leave of our old country towns, it may not be quite out of place to say a few words regarding the term 'picturesque'—and a few examples will be introduced from different parts with a view to elucidating this somewhat obscure adjective.

There would be no hesitation with any one in calling the old Castle Inn at Cambridge, for example, a picturesque example of a front, though the reason for its being so might not at first be quite obvious.

The singular quality of picturesqueness is that it can be found



Central Tower of York Minster, from Old Shambles.



in all sorts of buildings, erected for every possible purpose, and in narrow city lanes, and broad streets of country towns. It seems to be easily attained, and quite as easily lost; and it is of such value in our eyes, that it endears a home to us, and even raises a house in its market value.

It will be noticed that the designers of old allowed more space to the streets of a country town than to those of a walled city. The land which was enclosed was more secure and valuable; and consequently it was more closely packed with houses. In some streets the houses approach so closely that an ordinary man can almost touch each dwelling, as at Shrewsbury and Newark; and in some parts of Chester there are singularly narrow streets. The Shambles at York are a very good example of an ancient street that has undergone little alteration; and the great central tower of the Cathedral, rising in a vast pale grey at the farthest end, has a very noble appearance. The house on the left, with projecting stories, is of high antiquity. Stories were built to project, in order to make more of the land on which the houses were crowded together.

In Frankfort, and in some of the Continental towns, the dwellings run up to a great height, and are richly carved on the front with armorial bearings and historical scenes. They resemble the old houses that we occasionally find on the north side of St. Paul's, but that the latter want the rich carvings which we find so profusely on the Continent. They are, however, in many instances exceedingly picturesque, and, as before said, the word picturesque is of so undefined a character that it would be well to consider its meaning. Every one, as Mr. Petit has observed, has some notion of what he means by it himself, if even his own ideas may differ in some respect from those of his neighbours. What may be called 'restoring' architects have no idea, as a rule, of what the word means; they see what they call the excrescences of ages on a building of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, and they strike away the additions of the Tudor period and the Stuart, which are so dear to an artist, and add new work to correspond with the old. The old is then scraped to correspond with the new, and the result is a building that looks as if it had only been finished within the current year. This is, unhappily for the lovers of the picturesque, the crowning triumph of a church restorer. Bidston Church, for example, in Cheshire, was generally regarded as among the most picturesque little relics in all England; but some years ago it was considered to stand in need of repairs, which could have been easily made, and the venerable quaint structure, in the middle of a singularly old village, preserved; but it was

decided to demolish it, and build a totally new one on a new pattern; this is the work that is most congenial to a 'restorer.' It is not said in blame to any one; but as a matter of fact, the eye for the picturesque with all concerned was, in this case, entirely wanting. In a similar spirit, the remark was recently made to me, from a quarter where I should hardly have expected it, that Chester stood in need of remodelling. I was walking with a friend on the ancient walls that environ the city, and we were noticing how pleasantly it rose from the Dee, when my companion remarked that it was a shame to see such a site so spoiled; and said that if the old streets were pulled down, and new broad ones built, running down towards the river with cross ones at right angles, then a really fine city might stand in its place.

Plate-glass and patent brick were his notions of delight, and had for him more attractions than the projecting gables and the quaint rows and casemented mullion windows of our forefathers; and yet this was not on the score of utility, because I easily explained to him that, for convenience, the city as it stood was much more suitable for the wants of a country town; but an even row of new shops was, to his eye, as superior in comeliness, according to his words, as a new coat is to a threadbare tattered suit. Again, I knew an architect who had always practised in the Scottish-Greek style of Edinburgh; and though his experience in that was very great indeed, he was at a loss when required to build a Gothic church. He believed that irregularity and confusion were necessary for picturesqueness, and accordingly, when required to design one, he put buttresses at irregular distances, and windows with square heads, and pointed heads, and all sorts of widths ranged side by side—and the result was a grotesque failure. The very essence of beauty and picturesqueness is harmony. 'An old building,' says Mr. Petit, 'is not necessarily picturesque, but it is more likely to be so than a new one; first, because it is a work of art that has long been left in the hands of nature, whose marks are impressed upon it in various tints which art could not imitate, and in changes of surface and texture that denote the lapse of time; and next, because it brings together the present and the past: for even if there is no modern work at hand to remind us that it belongs to an age different from our own, still we feel that it does so, and the appreciation of picturesqueness as well as of beauty is an operation of the mind as well as of the bodily sense. Still, the presence of objects more nearly approaching our own period adds much to picturesqueness;' and Mr. Petit adds with great truth, that the figures in a picture of an old building should never be made to imitate the costume of the period

that it was built in, if picturesqueness be the object sought after. As an illustration of this, I may instance that I have just returned from a visit to some farm buildings in Cheshire, which once formed part of an Abbey. The refectory was filled with hay and straw, and wagons lay in front of an Abbot's private chapel—windowless, it is true, though the door and roof were perfect. A few labourers in the costume of the nineteenth century, with hay-forks over their shoulders, had just come in from the fields, and were going into the remains that had been converted into a dwelling.

Now let any one picture this to himself, adapting it to any abbey he may have in his mind, and then suppose the building painted in its original form, and peopled with Benedictine monks. How infinitely the present state of the abbey surpasses, for the purposes of an artist, the old one! There is nothing, of course, incongruous in it, for that would be fatal to picturesqueness, which demands harmony.

Nothing can be in worse taste than a row of Gothic windows, even if they are the same in outline, with different tracery in their designs. Merton College chapel at Oxford would not be so bad if the best of the windows (and they are fairly good) were the type of all; but as it is, the effect of the building—which, however, has other sins to answer for—is most displeasing. In a word, picturesqueness consists in uniformity and variety mingled together. We see it to perfection in many Continental towns that have not been much altered; and if we tried to get at the secrets of the designers of the buildings, I believe it would be found to consist in this: Each builder has had his own scheme, and fitted his work as well as he could to his neighbour's work; a harmony was thus kept throughout; nobody gave up his own individual requirements to make a window correspond with one in the next house, but he seemed to have a desire to be as neighbourly as possible in his design. Hence arose that pleasing mingling of uniformity and variety which has been insisted on as the soul of picturesqueness. Often the photograph of a landscape is so exactly suited to these conditions, that one may almost say that no change could be suggested for the better. The picture is in itself complete. If, however, a cottage or a row of cottages is introduced, it is wonderful how easily the landscape is marred; nor does it require much skill to destroy all the prospect; an ordinary builder or village wheelwright is generally quite equal to the occasion. The new edifice approaches the limit of the road allowed by the turnpike trust, and at once, as if by glamour, the ancient church, with its lych-gate and yews, disappears, and can only be seen after the

new brick building is passed by. The beautiful group we remember of old is no more, and if, as is probable, the new shop and cottages induce a little rivalry, we must be content to let it live only in our recollections. Now, I do believe that this very greatly accounts for the ugliness of modern designing as compared with old. There would not have been such a desire to consider oneself only, and let all the rest of the world be of no account in our eyes. Probably, any one designing new premises under some such conditions as I have indicated would have remembered that he had such things to respect as a neighbour, and hardly have been so ready to remove his landmarks. It by no means follows, however, that because buildings multiply there must of some necessity be a crowding up; and an almost random instance is given on the next page of a city scene from York.

Here the 'White Swan' and the 'York Herald' divide the pavement in the middle of an irregular row of houses, the view of which is cut off by St. Sampson's church. The spire rises in the distance with sufficient force to form an incisive object, and the group, simple as it is, is very pleasant. In the street shown here are the remains of the Parliament-house—for Parliaments were held at York as far back as the reign of Henry II. The quaint coaching-house that is traditionally connected with the parliaments; of course, is a building of less antiquity than the reign of Henry II., though probably it has seen at least four hundred summers. Of York, however, we have little now to say, except what pertains simply to the question in hand, the elements of picturesqueness in a city or town. Though so many buildings are shown in so small a space, the actual breadth is never lost. There are two churches, a newspaper office, and an inn, that all seem in some way to have found a *modus vivendi* without obscuring each other unduly. Indeed, we cannot do better than perambulate the streets of York in this locality, and notice how the scenes change at every step; whether the streets are narrow or broad, there is some new vista to delight the eye. Sometimes a cathedral tower disappears and another opens out in its place with some new combination, and sometimes for a little all disappear, and the ancient houses rise in perspective above the pinnacles of the Minster.

When these scenes were laid out, there was probably no studied design to attain them, but it would seem almost as if beauty had been inseparable from men's daily work. If a piece of furniture or household utensil was required, it was sure to be comely and quaint. We can no more design in their style now than we can write a ballad that could be passed off for an ancient one. Many have been the attempts to do the latter, and some of them have had a fair mea-

sure of success, but just at last some fatal flaw appears, and we discover the new wine in old bottles. The ironwork for supporting a village sign, that was probably designed and wrought by a village blacksmith, would put a man in a similar position to shame now, and perhaps a man in a much higher position too.



Sampson's Square, York.

I cannot close the present series better than by introducing a row of cottages from Chiddingstone, near Penshurst: a name that is sufficient to fill any one's recollections with associations of beauty. The country round here is one rich storehouse of ancient domestic architecture. Knowle, Hever, Ightham, are household words to

every student of old English architecture, and there are lesser examples like Chiddingstone in all directions. Nothing can exceed the quiet simple beauty of the row of houses shown here, and I often think it would be interesting to hear the remarks of the man who designed it, if he could have seen a modern brick row both internally and externally. He might perhaps have justly said that for convenience a modern kitchen range is superior to the old contrivances for cooking, and a brass tap he would justly consider an advance upon a well or a pump, but he would hardly think that a round brass knob was an improvement upon a bell-pull,



Chiddingstone.

like the one from Guildford given on the next page, which is finely modelled out of wrought iron; the row, also, of sculleries, with a bed-room over, that are tacked on to each house, and the yard walls, all at right angles stopped by a cross one, would fail to excite his admiration. As for the square lifeless rooms, with a sixpenny wall-paper and small painted chimney-piece, he would at once put these down as cells for refractory churchmen. The rows of dismal windows, each one a copy of its square neighbour, and fitted with that worst of all contrivances, a sash window, he would regard with the same feelings as we now should a hatter's

stock-in-trade where each article was of the same size and the same pattern. In the beautiful row shown on the preceding page the windows are of such levels and shapes as the necessities of the apartment require, and one pleasing varied effect is the result. The worst—or the best—feature in the case is, that the cost of a well-designed row would not exceed that of the bald dreary ones we see on the outskirts of any of our growing towns: supposing always—which is supposing, perhaps, rather too much—that the workmanship is substantial.

The most remarkable and inexplicable feature of the case is this, that at no time in our history have people been so alive to the charms of beauty and art. If a site for a building is beautiful, it is at once at a high premium; and the highest recommendation for a watering-place is, that in the neighbourhood is some charming scenery. Again, there are in London every year the very finest collections of paintings that have ever been gathered together; and we are compelled to admit that, judged solely by their merits, the greatest artists of whom we have any knowledge have lived, and do live, in the present century. Another anomaly is that people are so willing to contribute sums of money for architectural purposes which they disapprove of, but they are told it is correct; and this shows that, rightly directed, the ancient spirit that produced the buildings we delight in is not extinct. A vicar who has read the most elementary work on Gothic architecture can raise from any congregation a contribution which, as compared with their wealth, is enormously large, to make an ancient parish church look like an old friend with a new face. A new surface is given to it; lichens and weather-stains are removed; a boss or a well-remembered capital that is worn by time is broken up, and a new one is let in. Now, the hopeful feature in this is, that it shows a strong yearning after the picturesque. The parishioners feel a sad want, it is true, when their beloved building has departed for ever; only, they have been told to do it—they have little known that they were told by blind guides, and have found but wells without water. Still, the desire for beauty is evident enough in their misguided generosity, and affords a sufficient hope that in the fulness of time our villages and country towns will not be wanting in their ancient beauty.



Bell-pull, Guildford.

Coinages of the Brain.

THE means whereby we are enabled to form conceptions and judgments of the outer world, and of our own relations thereto, form the subject-matter of the most elementary study in the physiology of nerves. But as the understanding of the deepest problems often depends on the correctness of our primitive studies and on the soundness of the beginnings of knowledge, it may be well that, in studying the work of the brain, we should very briefly glance at the manner and method in which body or outer world usually acts upon mind, and mind in turn upon the frame it controls. Such a simple study in sensation will suffice to introduce us to some interesting phenomena of mind; and these last may prove of some service, even if they may but aid us in some degree to comprehend the nature and ways of our own being.

When, under ordinary circumstances, an impression from the external world reaches the outward parts of our nervous system, or passes through one of those 'gateways of knowledge' which we term an organ of sense, it is transmitted in due course to a special part of the nervous system named a nerve-centre. There the impression gives rise to actions or processes which result in the production of a 'sensation,' and commonly also of 'consciousness'—that is, the knowledge of the why and wherefore of our acts and feelings. Apart from metaphysical vagaries and subtleties, this much seems clear—that any simple sensation, starting like an electric current from the outer world, and passing along the wires we term nerves, to the head office or brain, gives rise therein to responsive feelings, and, it may be, to corresponding and related actions in the body as well. Example is more potent than precept; let us therefore turn to the study of a common sensation such as that of touch, by way of illustrating the ways and methods of the ordinary government of life. A person aims a blow at our head, and that important region is quickly, and we may add automatically, withdrawn from the threatened contact with the mal-content. The explanation of our action is perfectly clear. The impression of the moving fist was caught by the eye, was modified by its passage in the form of light-rays through that organ, was converted into a 'sensation,' was transmitted through a special (optic) nerve to the brain, was therein firstly transferred to some special region of the seat of mind, and finally gave rise to the 'consciousness' or thought of the danger which threatened our

person. Now, all of these actions took place so quickly that their accurate analysis might well seem to be impossible. Still, the sequence of events proves the accuracy of the statement that the seat of knowledge, and in this case the power of acting or walking by sight, is resident in some part of the brain, to which it is the function of the eye and optic nerve together to convey the impressions and sensations on which our knowledge depends. But the effects of the threatened blow end not thus with the declaration of 'information received' emanating from the brain. Like an active and efficient official, the brain is prone to act upon such intelligence. The head is withdrawn from the blow, the body itself is removed, it may be some paces backward; and unless discretion be deemed the better moiety of valour, there may be responsive and co-ordinated muscular actions of hands, arms, and possibly of legs or feet as well, wherewith swift and sure retaliation may be made upon the sensiferous organs and most tangent regions of our antagonist. In other words, if an impression has been received *by* the brain, it is no less plain that another—or it may be several—impressions have issued *from* the seat of mind. These have radiated, as directed by the brain, to the muscles of our head and neck, and to those of our limbs; and our subsequent movements are the result of this secondary brain-act which follows upon the reception of the previous impression. Thus we begin to understand that, in their nature, ordinary nervous acts are really double, and that all our ordinary acts and our extraordinary actions as well are regulated by a kind of duplex telegraphy on the part of the nervous system; whilst it becomes apparent that even the confused heat and bustle of a severe scrimmage—or the whirling maze of heads, hats, and coat-tails which are popularly believed to constitute an enlivening feature of festivals of which Donnybrook remains the type—may, through a patient scientific enquiry, be resolved into so many sensations received and acted upon through the system of mind-telegraphy just described.

It remains, therefore, a plain doctrine of modern physiology that our knowledge of the outer world is received and acted upon through a very definite system of actions and reactions. True, we do not know what constitutes an impression. We have measured the rate at which nerve-force travels, but the exact nature of this force is unknown. Consciousness—and the reception of impressions by the brain—has not advanced materially in explanation since Hartley, in his 'Observations on Man,' spoke of the 'vibrations of the small, and, as we may say, infinitesimal medullary particles,' which he conceived further to be 'motions backwards and forwards of the small particles' of the brain, and to present a similarity to 'the

oscillations of pendulums, and the tremblings of the particles of sounding bodies.' And of what takes place in the brain when the impression from the outer world is converted into that proceeding from brain to body and to the outer world again, we are likewise in the depths of ignorance. But despite our inability to read between the lines of the brain-work, the general nature of nerve-action remains as a clear and patent basis for further research. Nervous acts are now spoken of in physiology as being founded on the grand principle of 'reflex action,' with the name of which every schoolboy is familiarized by his physiology-primer. The ordinary acts of living and being are regulated on this duplex system. An impression (which we call *afferent* or *sensory*) travels inward to the brain or other centre, and is there converted into another impulse (named *efferent* or *motor*), which passes outwards to muscles, to glands, to other organs, or it may be to some other part of the brain itself. The original impression or sensation is thus 'reflected,' as it were, from a nerve-centre to some other organ or part. The sensation of withdrawal from danger, to which the threatened blow gives rise in the brain, was duly 'reflected,' and thus passed onwards to the head and neck-muscles, and, in the case of practical retaliation, to the muscles of the limbs. So that, in this view of matters, the brain may be regarded as largely performing the functions of a complex 'clearing-house,' where the varied business-concerns of the frame are assorted, parcelled out, rearranged, and finally transmitted to their proper destinations.

Other examples of this duplex system, and of the power of the head-centre of the nervous system to receive and retransfer impressions and sensations, may throw a further light upon some special features and noteworthy characteristics of its action. Select, for instance, the sensation of touch, and we shall have forcibly impressed upon our understanding the fact that the brain or sensorium is the true and actual seat of knowledge. This latter truism, plain as it may appear, is not usually appreciated until the attention has been directly called thereto. It is needful, in truth, for the correct understanding of the evolution of mind-phantasies and illusions, that such a truth should be continually present in all its plainness to the mind. We touch a table, and the *rationale* of the nervous acts therein implied is readily explained. Thought—laying aside the question of antecedent conditions and influences—begins the act, and determines the desire to touch the object. This thought next becomes transformed into nerve-force—how, why, when, where, are details all-important in their profundity, but immaterial to the plain issue before us. This nerve-force passes, under the direction of the brain,

along definite nerve-tracts, leading, say, to the forefinger of the right hand. On the way, it stimulates the appropriate muscles. Thus the finger is brought in contact with that part of the outer world represented by the table, and a 'sensation' (of touch) is the result of the contact in question. Here ends the act, we may be disposed to say; but our previous knowledge of 'reflex action' and its nature forbids the supposition. 'How do you know you touched the table?' is the pertinent query of physiology. The reply is, 'Because I felt the contact betwixt my nerves and the object in question.' But, retorts the physiologist, 'feeling is a brain act; it is an act wherein consciousness or knowledge participates. The seat of knowledge is not the tip of the finger, but the brain. And you must therefore reasonably assume that to the brain the sensation formed and produced in the forefinger is transmitted.' Thus we find logical justification for the doctrine of 'reflex action,' in a common-sense study of the results of touch. The motor impulse sent out from the brain, and, putting the arm and hand in motion, is returned to the brain. It is 'reflected' back as a sensory impulse to the sensorium, and kindles therein the knowledge we desire even whilst we are yet in mere expectancy.

But is this induction founded upon anything more than a consistent theory of brain control and bodily action? In 1811 Sir Charles Bell published his first essay on the nerves which originate from the spinal cord (hence called 'spinal nerves') and which supply the body generally with nervous power. The spinal cord itself being a direct continuation downwards of the brain, it follows that impulses from the brain pass at first along the main line of the spinal marrow—lodged securely within the bony canal formed by the spine—and thereafter pass along the nerves or branch lines to various stations and termini in the body. To Sir Charles Bell belongs the great and lasting merit of the discovery of the difference in function between the two roots by which each spinal nerve arises from the spinal cord. Each nerve passing outwards to the body, thus consists in reality of two sets of nerve-fibres, indistinguishable by microscopic investigation, similar in appearance, but widely different in use and function. Once for all settling, by vivisection on rabbits, the meaning of the double-rooted origin of the nerves, Bell laid the foundation of all subsequent knowledge of nerves and their functions to which in these latter days we have attained. 'On laying bare the roots of the spinal nerves,' says Bell, 'I found I could cut across the posterior fasciculus (or hinder root) of nerves, which took its origin from the posterior portion of the spinal marrow,

without convulsing the muscles of the back ; but that, on touching the anterior fasciculus (or front root) with the point of the knife, the muscles of the back were immediately convulsed.' Thus was foreshadowed the great truth that those fibres of a nerve which arise from the hinder part of the spinal cord endow us with sensation ; whilst the front roots give us power of motion. Turn now to the phenomena of touch, and let us endeavour to see how Bell's observation supplies the demonstration of the reflex or duplex theory of nervous acts. When the impression which resulted in your touching the table flashed down the spinal cord from your brain, it was a *motor* impulse. As such, its definite track lay along the anterior part of the spinal cord. It left the cord by the front roots of the nerve-trunk passing to the arm ; and travelled along these anterior fibres which unite with the fibres of the hinder root to form apparently a uniform and single-fibred nerve. Reaching the limb, the motor impression arrived at its terminus, and discharged its duty by bringing the muscular arrangements of arm and hand into co-ordination, and thus bringing finger and table into contact. A 'sensation' was thus brought into existence, but this latter impression—probably consisting of the transformed 'motor' impulse which the instant before had travelled down the limb—passed rapidly backwards to the brain as a *sensory* impression. Along the second set of fibres in the nerves of the limb it was duly conveyed. Arriving at the grand junction where the branch nerve from the arm joined the main line of the spinal cord, the impression passed along the hinder root of the nerve into the cord, and ascended to the brain by the hinder part of the great nerve-tract. In the brain-centre, the 'sensation' gave rise to consciousness and knowledge ; and thus 'reflex action' becomes demonstrated as a veritable entity and as the method whereby the complex machinery of body is brought into harmonious relation with the still more intricate mechanism of brain and mind.

Next in order, and by way of close to these preliminary studies in sensation, we should note that it is perfectly immaterial, in so far as the universality of reflex action as the basis of nervous acts is concerned, whether the original or primary impulse begins in the brain as the result of thought, or arises directly from the outer world itself ; that is, it matters not whether the first impulse or sensation be 'motor' or 'sensory' in its nature—the same sequence essentially follows the initiation of any nervous action. The 'mouth waters' at the sight of a dainty—proportionately, in the experience of most of us, as the chances of obtaining the desired morsel grow few and far between. Here a sensory impulse has passed to the

brain through a nerve (the optic) which happens to be of purely sensory kind. In the brain the sensation, or sensory impulse, has been transformed into an afferent impulse—termed ‘secretory’ in this instance, because it is reflected to the salivary glands of the mouth, with the familiar result just detailed of causing them to secrete their characteristic fluid. In this case the ‘sensory’ impulse therefore begins the reflex act; whilst in the case of touching the table it is a ‘motor’ impulse which first leaves the brain, and which is soon converted into a sensory impression ending in consciousness or knowledge. Equally important is the question, how does the brain regulate the direction and transmission of the messages innumerable which hour by hour flit in and out of its portals? To such a query no answer is possible. Why or how we are able to move this finger or that, how we can lift this limb or the other, is a mystery of mysteries in modern physiology, dwelling as yet in the farthest Arcanum of the science. Lord Dundreary’s question, ‘why a dog wags his tail?’ if placed in contrast to his lordship’s companion and equally grave query, ‘why does the tail not waggle the dog?’ in reality involves a physiological enigma of which not even the shadow of a reply is yet visible. All that may be said on this head is, that the brain must possess amongst its other attributes the pointsman-like power of directing nerve-impulses into whatever channels the will and mind may prompt. Thus the physiological mystery of the will is as deep and insoluble, at present, as the metaphysical or theological aspects of the question; and thus appears before us a puzzle exceeding that of the Sphinx in its gravity—in plain language, we are unable to tell the reason why we are able to do as we like.

Summing up the few details we have gleaned in our elementary but highly essential study of the broad mechanism of nerves and brain, we may thus learn to distinguish between sensory and motor impressions and between the nerve-fibres along which each is conveyed. We note the power of the brain to reflect, rearrange, and transmit such impulses as reach its substance. We have seen that reflex action in reality forms the basis of our own life and habits, and by a further extension of thought we may note the part it plays in the life of all other beings. When a snail’s tentacle is touched, that modest gasteropod withdraws itself from public observation, and retires at once into the quietude of private life. Reflex action, which has transmitted the sensation of touch to the nearest nerve-centre and thence to the muscles of the body, is clearly responsible for the behaviour of the mollusc. Even a sea-anemone captures the crab that has stumbled against its tentacles by a like or allied exercise of nerve-acts; and the sensi-

tive plant, and Venus' Flytrap, exhibit the essential features of nerve action in that information received is transmitted elsewhere through the organism, and reacts upon the life and existence of the plant.

For the due performance of reflex action three things are required. First in point of importance comes a nerve-centre; next in importance we place a sensory, and then a motor nerve-fibre, leading respectively to and from the centre. Concerning the nerve-centre we have hitherto spoken as if the brain were the sole representative of the chief office of the telegraphic system of the frame. Be it known, however, that whilst the brain is such a centre, or rather collection of centres and chief departments, there exist in the body numerous other foci, so to speak, whence impressions may be reflected and rearranged. Next in importance to the brain, we find the spinal cord to act as a nerve-centre; and it is perhaps the only focus of nerve power, in addition to the brain, of which special mention need be made at present. One observes how the cord may serve as a centre in those too frequent cases of shock to the spine seen after railway accidents and similar exigencies of life. The patient with a severely injured cord is practically dead to sensation below the seat of injury, is powerless to move his legs, and yet will have his limbs thrown into violent convulsions when the soles of his feet are tickled. Over this latter action he has no control, just as he has no knowledge of the irritating cause beyond what his eyes reveal. Yet the explanation is clear. The sensory impulse given to the soles of the feet passed up the spinal cord to the nearest centre in the cord below the seat of injury, and is therefrom reflected to the muscles of the legs, producing the contortions in question. And more wonderful still is the case of that physiologically useful animal the frog, which, lacking its head, behaves itself as does a whole and sound amphibian; wipes off with one foot a drop of vinegar which has been placed on the other; manœuvres its legs when in a difficulty regarding the removal of the vinegar; keeps its balance on your shifting hand; preserves its equilibrium with the agility of an acrobat; and otherwise comports itself in a fashion which strikes awe to the uninitiated mind, but which demonstrates clearly enough the functions of the spinal cord as a nerve-centre to the physiological understanding.

From the study of the mechanism of sensations in general we may profitably turn to that of sensations in particular, wherein we shall find our elementary knowledge not merely an aid, but an absolute essential, towards a clear appreciation of the unusual and strange as well as of the familiar in human existence. The thoughts

and concepts we entertain of the world around us may be regarded as the impressions, more or less thoroughly fixed, of sensations which have been conveyed to us by many and varied channels from that outer universe. How the impressions became fixed, or how we are enabled to reproduce them almost at will from the memory-chambers of the brain, are subjects which may perchance be briefly glanced at later on. Suffice it to remark that knowledge largely, if not completely, consists in a physiological sense of 'registered impressions,' which have become, in some mysterious fashion, part and parcel of the cerebral substance, and which have been stamped more or less indelibly on the organ of mind. 'The coinage of the brain,' in very truth, derives its rough form and shape from the outer universe; it is the brain itself which thereafter stamps and issues the refined products as the thoughts of men. These thoughts thus arise wholly or in greater part from impressions, which, being derived directly or indirectly from the objects and material world around us, we may term *objective* sensations. They consist of the mental photographs of the outer world, of ourselves, and of our own relations to the world, which have been projected inwards so to speak, and there fixed, to be printed off, as occasion requires, for future use. The effort to recall reminiscences of past life and the ineffective search after memories may be readily enough likened—to pursue the same simile—to the attempts of the mental photographer to find amidst his many negatives the particular one required by the exigency of the moment. Now and then we give up the quest in despair; but just as frequently, at a time when the necessity for the remembrance of the event has passed by, there dawns upon us the missing recollection—the reproduction, by some sudden and inexplicable trait of mind-photography, of the mental positive, printed off from its stored-up and long-hidden facsimile. I should maintain, indeed, as a plausible enough theory of the memory-faculty and its action, that no mental concept is ever lost entirely. Crowded out of mind by the thoughts of later years, impressions of youth may nevertheless be suddenly resuscitated by a chance word or a passing glance. And often unconsciously to ourselves, and in ways defying logical conception, we may thus build veritable 'haunted houses,' wherein the phantoms that rise and walk and converse are not of flesh and blood, but represent the figures, ways, and even speech of those whose life is buried in the past, and whose time was that of the long ago.

That, however, this memory-power of projecting from within outwards, upon our intelligence, impressions, and sensations—either of real nature, or blurred and indistinct from causes beyond our ken—possesses a further significance than merely that attaching to

a feasible speculation in physiology may readily enough be made plain. We sit down in some quiet nook on a still day, when hardly a sound may be heard, and when the voices of the outer world appear to be well-nigh hushed to silence, and, favoured by outward conditions, we fall into a reverie. Abstracted from that outer world, image after image is projected from within outwards upon our intelligence, which occasionally may actually fancy it sees vividly the objects it displays, or that it hears the sounds which old memories so clearly bring before it. A tune hummed softly awakens a thousand memories; the singer of olden days comes before us in all the reality of existence; the surroundings are reproduced with faithful exactitude; the most trifling detail comes boldly into the foreground of thought; a ribbon, a bracelet, the pattern of a carpet, the hue of a dress—these and a thousand other details are pictured out with truest fidelity; and the story is acted before our eyes so faithfully, that it is with a start of wonderment we suddenly come back to the workaday world, to find 'it was but a waking dream.' Nor can we refuse to consider the influence of repetition and habit as a predominating cause of such abstraction and reveries. Who does not know the 'dreamer' of everyday life, or it may be the poet or poet-aster, wrapt in a mantle of thought which defies the penetration of mundane things, and within which he sees and hears a universe of his own? A near gradation, however, brings us within range of the 'hallucination' and 'illusion,' where the creatures and coinages of the brain are projected with more marked effect and in bolder relief than before. Now, it is Satan tempting a Luther—a very devil in the flesh, with whom the religionist converses and argues, whom he defies loudly and persistently, and at whose head the irate reformer throws his ink-horn—a proceeding typical, indeed, of the extinction of many demons by the sweetness and light of pencil and pen. Then it may be a St. Anthony struggling with an evil spirit of sensuality, or with actual demons who chastise him cruelly. Or it is Joan of Arc who is admonished by 'Our Lady of Bellemont' to succour her country, and to take to arms for its defence; or it is the Hindu, prostrate in pious ecstasy before the shrine of Brahmah, his visions, realities, and his fancied converse with the Almighty One transformed thus into a dread reality.

Such were the hallucinations of the age of Faith. But they have not ceased in our own day. The religionist before whom the saintly image moves, to whom it speaks, is a reality of the age we live in, no less than is the insane being we seclude in our asylum. In truth, the study of the former is as much a matter of interest as that of the insane; because, under certain phases of mind, the

illusion or hallucination of the one may become the mental disease of the other. Thus it is plain that, given abstraction of thought and imaginative play, and we may evolve from our inner consciousness that poetic fervour which

bodies forth

The forms of things unknown—

or we may revel, by a further development of the same faculty, in the wildest dreams which ever peopled the fancies of an excited visionary, or entranced the tottering intellect of the really insane.

It is, however, necessary that we should distinguish between an 'illusion' and an 'hallucination'; since, although both are stages and gradations in the same series of mental actions, the moral and actual significance of the one may be widely different from that of the other. Under the general name of 'hallucination,' some authorities include every mental phase or act which is founded upon abnormal brain-action, and which tends to land its possessor and subject on the shores and amid the quicksands of the unreal. Dr. Tanner, in his careful general summary of insanity and its conditions, distinguishes thus between an 'hallucination' and a 'delusion': 'Almost every insane patient labours under hallucinations of one or more of the senses—he sees or converses with imaginary beings. When he is satisfied by the evidence of his other senses that what he sees and hears is only an *illusion*, he is said to labour under a *hallucination*; whereas, when he believes in his false perceptions, the hallucination becomes a delusion.' The objection to Dr. Tanner's definition is, that he starts apparently with the assumption that all persons who suffer from illusions and hallucinations are necessarily insane. The difference, however, between the two latter conditions of mind is clearly and distinctly inferred in the definition just recorded. An 'illusion' may best be defined as a disturbed state of the mental faculties wherein the subject, sooner or later coming to test his thoughts and impressions 'by the evidences of his other senses,' determines that these impressions are unreal. The 'hallucination,' on the contrary, is not so corrected, and the belief in the appearances seen or heard being sustained, the hallucination deepens and merges into the 'delusion.' An 'illusion' as above defined, therefore, does not include or imply insanity. The very fact that the powers of reason are brought into play to correct the phantasies of the mind places the illusion beyond the sphere of the *maison de santé*. Hence Dr. Tanner may be held to correct the impression which his own words are calculated to convey when he says, 'Illusions are frequently observed in a state of mental health, being thus corrected by the reason.' But over definitions, save for the purpose of defining the

use of the terms in question, it is needless to delay. Suffice it to remark that the two may gradually be merged together, just as the 'hallucination' in its defined place may be said to link the 'illusion' of the sane with the mad thoughts, delusions, and visions of the really insane. With the explanation of the latter we have nothing at present to do. The person who wrote to Dr. Conolly, demanding 'A Holy Bible with engravings, &c., a Concordance, a Martyrology with plates, some other religious books, a late Geographical Grammar, a Modern Gazetteer, newspapers, magazines, almanacks, &c., of any kind or date; musical instruments and music; large plans, guides, maps, directories,' and many other works; ending his epistle with a demand for 'wines, fruit, lozenges, tobacco, snuff, oysters, money—everything fitting to Almighty God,' and who concluded his letter with the remark, 'Answer this in three days, or you go to hell. P.S.—A portable desk and stationery, and a dressing-case'—such a correspondent—a monomaniac—no doubt suffered from hallucinations, but of a type in which they had become the delusions of a hopeless case of insanity. On the other hand, the sane man who sees and hears things he knows to be nonentities, and to represent merely the coinages of his brain, despite their vividness and apparent reality, is a subject of physiological and not of medical study; and the brief chronicle of such a history enables us also to explain scientifically the visions of the ghost-seer, and the beatific spectacles which greet the exalted senses of the religious devotee.

Through our study of sensation and its *rationale* we saw that mental conceptions of outside objects, or of external sounds and other material phenomena, were carried inwards to the brain and there stored up for future use. We have likewise seen that in a day-dream this formation of mental images—or of *objective sensations*, as we termed them—appears to be superseded by another class of sensations which may be appropriately named *subjective*, since they are produced by internal causes, by inward phases of mental action, and are thus opposed to those sensations which are derived from the outer world. Just as in ordinary nervous action the brain receiving, as we have seen, an impression from the outer world, transfers that impulse elsewhere, so we may conceive that sensations and ideas which pass to the brain as a terminus may be reflected and returned along the pathway by which they entered the kingdom of mind, and thus give rise to impressions of the 'subjective' class. Or, to quote a happy remark, 'Consciousness has a foreground as well as a background.' On the clear appreciation of this simple fact hangs the explanation of a very grave and complex theme. For the illusions of the visionary, and the waking

dreams of the seer, are scientifically explicable on the supposition of their 'subjective' character. On the belief that they represent images reflected outwardly from the brain upon the organs of sense, we may well understand how things not seen normally become realities to those who see them from within.

Every day may be said to bring to the healthy mind practical instances of the occurrence of subjective sensations, such as in more typical development constitute the 'illusions' of the curious. To select an example within the practical reach of all who may be disposed to try the experiment, suppose we allow the head to depend for some time as in the stooping posture, we hear noises in the ears, sounds of 'singing' or 'ringing,' as we popularly term them; flashes of light before the eyes—also beheld in cases of direct irritation of the organ of sight—and we may also experience a variety of other sensations which are truly 'subjective,' in that they are produced by no outward noises or sights, but by an internal cause, most probably temporary congestion of the nerve-centres. That there should exist a perfectly natural tendency to speak of the phenomena just mentioned as 'heard' and 'seen' respectively is a matter exciting no comment. We continually refer to the outward and usual sources of sensations, the impressions which may actually be produced from within. The effect of this perfectly natural method of discerning the origin of sensations becomes ludicrous in practice when, through surgical circumstances over which the patient has no control, a change of locality befalls the nerves in question. A subjective sensation, for instance, refers pain at the extremity of a stump to the portion of the limb which has been removed. A patient who possesses no leg may thus feel pain in his toes. More curious still are the results of the Talia-cotian operation for the restoration of the nose. In such a procedure, a flap of skin is detached from the forehead and folded down so as to form the new olfactory organ. So long as the flap remains connected with the forehead, so long will the patient refer his sensations to the forehead when the new nose is touched. That 'things are not what they seem' may thus be illustrated physiologically in a very perfect fashion. Subjective sensation here refers the impression to the original seat of the skin—namely, the forehead—although in time the nose-flap adjusts its sensibility to its new position. So, also, in the well-known experiment of crossing the fore and middle fingers and feeling the tip of the nose with the crossed digits, the organ of smell appears double. Here the surfaces of touch being altered and transposed, the double sensation or illusion arises from the mind referring the impression received by each finger to the natural and separate position of the digits.

Still more remarkable are certain subjective sensations produced by a potent belief in the existence of the conditions which give rise to actual (or objective) sensations of like kind. The late Professor Bennett of Edinburgh relates a case in which a procurator fiscal, or public prosecutor, in Scotland attended the exhumation of a body in a case of supposed murder, and had to withdraw from the scene on account, as he alleged, of the overpowering odour attending the procedure, and emitted, as he believed, by the coffin. On the latter being examined, it was found to be empty! Another case illustrates, in an equally interesting fashion, the ideational and internal origin of sensations through an intense belief in the real nature of the external conditions which ordinarily produce them. An Edinburgh butcher, engaged in placing a heavy joint of meat on a hook situated above his head, slipped so that the hook appeared to penetrate his arm, and to suspend him thereby. Carried into a druggist's shop close at hand, he was pale, well-nigh pulseless, and suffering, as he said, acute agony, which was intensified on the arm being moved. When, however, the arm was examined, not a trace of injury was to be observed. The hook had merely penetrated the sleeve of his coat; yet his subjective sensations referring the injury to his arm were so real that the pallor and shock were as typically represented as if he had really been transfixed.

A still more remarkable instance of the paramount influence of subjective sensation in determining effects which would result from real or objective impressions is witnessed in the death of the surgical patient from fright as he lay on the operating-table, when Mr. Liston had merely happened to trace the line of incision with his finger. And the imaginative person who in the early days of plate-glass windows caught a severe cold from sitting, as he thought, at an open window—his eye being deceived by the want of divisions in the glass—likewise illustrated the power of subjective impressions.

From the normal creations of the brain in healthy existence we pass by a gradual transition to those cases of subjective sensations which appear as the result of some abnormal action of the brain, and which therefore bring us to the borderland or neutral territory between the domain of the sane and that of the insane. The sense which appears to be most frequently subject to illusions or subjective sensations is that of hearing. That actual injury will produce specific derangement of this and other senses is a perfectly well-known fact of physiology. A person, after a fall from his horse in which he had sustained some brain-injury, was conscious until his death—which occurred some years thereafter—

of a bad odour. In another case of similar nature, one of the membranes of the brain was found diseased after death. Dr. Maudsley tells us in his 'Pathology of Mind' of an old gentleman 'who, perfectly intelligent in other respects, believed that offensive odours emanated from his body to such a degree as to cause great distress to all who were brought near him in his business, which,' adds the author, 'he nevertheless conducted with skill and judgment.' This person declared that his next-door neighbours were greatly annoyed, and that even cab-horses suffered from his presence. He slept so many hours in one room, changing his bedroom during the night to avoid the concentration of the poisonous odour; yet during this period his business-partner had not observed any one irrational feature in his conduct. Ultimately he recovered from a somewhat serious illness, with the result of being at the same time cured of his illusion.

The well-known historical case of Nicolai, the Academician and bookseller of Berlin, read by himself before the Royal Society of that city in 1799, presents us with a most typical instance of the apparent reality of subjective sensations, arising from some alienation of the sense of sight. After a period of mental disquietude consequent upon a quarrel, Nicolai began to see various figures which he was conscious were but illusory in nature. There appeared to him the figure of a deceased person, which stood about ten yards off, and remained for about eight minutes. The apparition was unseen by his wife, to whom Nicolai appealed, and in about two hours after the first phantom had appeared it was succeeded by several others. Becoming accustomed to the incident, and recovering from the natural surprise at their appearance, Nicolai set himself to examine these new and unwonted incidents of his life, but failed to associate it with any known cause or condition. When he passed into an adjoining room, the first figure which had appeared, followed him. After a day or so had passed, this first figure was succeeded by others, amongst whom friends and strangers were commingled. His intimate friends and associates but rarely appeared in the phantom crowd. His sensations may best be understood from his own words—'After I had recovered from the first impression of terror, I never felt myself particularly agitated by these apparitions, as I considered them to be what they really were—the extraordinary consequences of indisposition; on the contrary, I endeavoured as much as possible to preserve my composure of mind, that I might remain distinctly conscious of what passed within me.' There was no connection betwixt the phantoms and his thoughts; nor, as he tells us, could he produce at will spectral representatives of his friends. 'I

tried,' says Nicolai, 'to reproduce at will the persons of my acquaintance by an intense objectivity of their image; but although I saw distinctly in my mind two or three of them, I could not succeed in causing the interior image to become exterior.' Neither solitude nor the presence of company affected the distinctness of the images. By day and by night they were equally discernible to Nicolai, and at home and abroad they appeared to his mental gaze, whilst the act of closing the eyes had no constant effect in causing their disappearance. Although resembling real figures, he had no difficulty in distinguishing them from living persons; and although mixing with one another, the phantoms did not appear to be of a social or communicative disposition.

In about four weeks after their first appearance, says Nicolai, 'the number of these apparitions increased; I began to hear them speak; sometimes they spoke to each other, generally to me. Their discourse was agreeable and short. Occasionally I took them for sensible and tender friends of both sexes, who strove to soften my grief: their consolatory speeches being in general addressed to me when I was alone. These consolatory addresses consisted sometimes of abrupt phrases, and at other times they were regularly executed. Although my mind and body were at this period in a sound state, and the spectres had become so familiar to me that they did not cause me the least annoyance, I sought by suitable means to rid myself of them.¹ An application of leeches was made to my head one morning (April 20th, 1791) at eleven o'clock. The surgeon was alone with me,' continues Nicolai; 'during the operation the room was filled with human figures of every kind: this hallucination continued without interruption till half-past four, when I perceived that the motion of the phantoms became slower. Soon afterwards they began to grow pale, and at seven o'clock they had all a whitish appearance; their movements were slow, but their forms still distinct. By degrees they became vaporous, and appeared to mix with the air, although some of their parts remained very visible for some time. About eight o'clock they were all gone, since which time I have seen nothing of them, although I have thought more than once they were about to appear.'

This interesting recital affords us not only a very typical

¹ Nicolai, it may be mentioned, had neglected to undergo the periodical blood-letting in which our great-grandfathers and the succeeding generation indulged in spring-time, on some curious and mistaken popular notion (probably founded upon the periodic revival of nature and the returning growth of plants) that local depletion was necessary for the preservation of health.

case of spectral illusions, but suggests from certain of its details the influence of continuance and habit in intensifying the appearances presented by the phantom array. At first the spectres preserved the usual ghostly silence; and in about a month after their first appearance Nicolai began to hear them speak, whilst they increased in number as time advanced. These two latter phases of Nicolai's case are highly instructive. They tend to prove, firstly, that subjective sensations, like normal or objective impressions, increase in number and distinctness with use and habit; and they show, in the second place, that a continuance of the sensations developed their complexity and intensified the reality of the creatures of Nicolai's brain. The apparent addition of speech on the part of the phantoms, and the illusion of words, clearly showed that the affection had become one of subjective hearing, as well as of subjective sight. And thus illusions exhibit a tendency to develop or to disappear like aberrations of bodily functions; whilst the course and nature of these 'troubles of the brain,' as a rule, are in perfect harmony with the spirit of the age, with the special proclivities of the subject, and with the times in which the sufferer lives—two facts to which may be added a third, namely, the palpable influence of habits of body or mind—such as religious fervour and belief—upon the production and nature of the illusions in question.

The case of a Mrs. A., related by Sir David Brewster, is as typical as that of Nicolai, in its description of the development of these 'coinages of the brain.' On December 21, 1830, this lady was startled to hear her husband's voice calling to her. After opening every door in the neighbourhood of the hall in which she was standing, she concluded that Mr. A. must have departed from the house, but was more than surprised to find, on Mr. A.'s return home, that he had not been near the house on the occasion referred to. Some days thereafter, on entering the drawing-room which she had left a few minutes before, she saw Mr. A. standing with his back to the fire. On asking him why he had returned so soon from his walk, the figure looked fixedly at her, but did not speak. Thereupon, thinking her husband involved in thought, she sat down in an arm-chair close by, with the remark, 'Why don't you speak?' Thereupon the figure passed towards a window at the farther end of the room, still gazing upon her, and in its progress she remarked that she heard no noise of footsteps or any other of the usual sounds made in progression. She was now convinced that she was gazing upon a spectral illusion. The figure soon disappeared, but while it remained before her it appeared to conceal the objects before which it stood. Similar

illusions were noted by Mrs. A. in the case of the cat, which she imagined she saw in the drawing-room, but which was at that particular moment in the housekeeper's apartment. Her husband was witness of the latter incident. Amongst the other figures which appeared to this lady was that of a female relative who was at the period in question in Scotland in perfect health, but whose image appeared enveloped in grave-clothes, and in the ghastly appearance of death. And on another occasion, when alone in her bedroom, and in the act of repeating a passage from the 'Edinburgh Review' which had captivated her notice and memory, she beheld seated in an arm-chair a deceased sister-in-law. The figure was clad in a gown of a peculiar pattern which had been vividly described to her by a friend who had seen the deceased lady wear it. Here a dominant idea—that of the description of the dress—had probably lent its aid to increase the realism of, or even to produce, this particular phantom. In the case of another illusion, the figure of a second deceased friend sat down in a chair opposite Mrs. A., on an occasion when several other persons were in the room. Mrs. A. was afraid lest the fact of her staring persistently at what to her visitors would appear empty space should be noticed; and 'under the influence of this fear,' says Sir David Brewster, and recollecting that Sir Walter Scott in his 'Demonology' had mentioned such a procedure, 'she summoned up the requisite resolution to enable her to cross the space before the fireplace, and seat herself in the same chair with the figure. The apparition remained perfectly distinct till she sat down, as it were, in its lap, when it vanished.'

The case of Mrs. A. presents some noteworthy resemblances to that of Nicolai. She was a person of imaginative disposition, and she was in feeble health at the period when the illusions appeared. Her strong common-sense, aided, as Sir David Brewster tells us, by a perusal of Dr. Hibbert's famous work on the 'Philosophy of Apparitions'—wherein that learned author declares that 'apparitions are nothing more than morbid symptoms which are indicative of intense excitement of the renovated feelings of the mind'—served to free Mrs. A. from ideas of supernatural visitation, by which, it is not too much to say, nine persons out of ten amongst ourselves would be apt to explain the unwonted appearances. The physiological explanation of cases of spectral illusions is, however, simple in the extreme when the possibilities of morbid and deranged sensation are seen to relate themselves in a very exact and plain fashion to the natural method of receiving impressions. Those parts of Mrs. A.'s brain, eye, and ear, and of Nicolai's brain and organs of sense, which, under normal conditions, would have

been concerned in the reception of actual sights and sounds, were made active and operated under some internal cause to produce the unwonted phenomena. As we have already noted, it is highly probable that in so acting the sensory organs and brain are but reproducing from the background, and projecting into the foreground of consciousness, images of which the conscious memory retains no impression, but which have been received at some past epoch of the individual history, and which, under unwonted stimulation, are evolved so as to appear part and parcel of our own personality.

That this latter conclusion—namely, that of the act in question being essentially one of memory—is perfectly justifiable, is rendered strikingly apparent by the case of Mrs. A., all of whose apparitions were those of known persons, and thus were simple reproductions of mental images, in one of which—that of the deceased sister-in-law—a vivid description of a particular pattern of dress served to add to the apparent reality of the illusion. In Nicolai's case, the strangers who appeared to him were, in all probability, the images of persons whom he had either seen in bygone days, and of whom he failed to retain any recollection; or were those of people with whose figures or appearance he was familiar from reading. In our own experience, we can readily recall to mind instances of the sudden recollection of faces, figures, scenery, &c., the details of which may have long been forgotten, but which may be revived by the application of an appropriate mental stimulus. Such a thought serves to suggest the important part which what may be termed 'unconscious memory' plays in the regulation of mind-affairs and in human existence at large.

A scientific theory of ghosts is thus not merely possible, but in the highest degree probable, as resting on a scientific basis. But there are other matters to which a study like the present intimately relates itself. The vitiation of testimony by the aberration of the senses—or even the variations between the evidence of one witness and another—become explicable on the basis of varying sensations thus laid down. Nor does the domain of religion escape physiological attention. The mystic experiences of votaries and the heroism of martyrs may alike be capable of explanation under the belief of that exaltation of sense, and of the alteration of sensations and feelings, which appear to affect every period of human history, and which indeed often embody many of the peculiarities of each individual epoch. No less intimately, however, does the present subject concern that idealization of material things in which the highest genius of poet, painter, sculptor, and musician may be said to reside. The creations of the brain are not wholly

on the side of phantasy; and from the subjective side of human nature, the distilled and purified feelings of mankind may be evolved in thoughts that live for aye. But the gradation betwixt the æsthetics of sensation and the abnormal play of impressions is still clearly marked and plainly apparent. And there are few higher missions or triumphs than those of 'star-eyed science,' which, taking as her theme the creatures and coinages of the brain, may show us the stern realities and facts which beset and often underlie the veriest dreams and phantoms of our life.

[Since the above article was written, the Rev. Dr. Jessopp has related in the 'Athenæum' of January 10, 1880, a curious and most interesting case of ghost-seeing in his own person. Sitting on the night of October 10, 1879, in a room in Lord Orford's mansion, Dr. Jessopp beheld 'a large white hand' within a foot of his elbow; and then became conscious of the presence of the spectre of 'a somewhat large man with his back to the fire, bending slightly over the table, and apparently examining,' says Dr. Jessopp, 'the pile of books that I had been at work upon.' The figure was dressed in 'a kind of ecclesiastical habit of thick corded silk or some such material, close up to the throat, and a narrow rim or edging, of about an inch broad, of satin or velvet serving as a stand-up collar, and fitting close to the chin.' Dr. Jessopp, eager to sketch his spectral visitant, made a movement towards a pile of books, but the figure vanished. After a short interval the figure reappeared; Dr. Jessopp's anxiety to address it resulting in a nervous fear of his own voice. Resuming and finishing his task of transcribing some notes, the reverend narrator shut his book and threw it on the table; 'it made a slight noise as it fell—the figure vanished.'

This clear and interesting account adds but another to the list of cases of which Nicolai's and that of Mrs. A. are typical examples. Dr. Jessopp's experiences present all the features usually seen in such cases, and his rational treatment of the phenomena may fitly be placed beside the common-sense behaviour of Mrs. A.—both refusing to translate the natural in terms of the supernatural, and both tacitly referring the illusion to the 'mind's eye.' One point alone, in Dr. Jessopp's case, demands special note. The figure was that of a past epoch; and it was such as a man of antiquarian tastes and studies might expect to be included amongst the special 'coinages' of his brain. This fact alone militates strongly in favour of the remarks already made in the preceding article, regarding the probability that the basis of our illusions resides in the memory of things or persons seen, heard, read about, or even imagined. That Dr. Jessopp's 'ghostly visitant' may most likely have been the reproduction of some antiquarian study—utterly forgotten, but unconsciously reproduced by memory—is by no means a far-fetched theory, taking all the facts of the case into consideration.]

ANDREW WILSON.

Justice in the Punjab.

IN the opinion of the wise, the less one has to do with the law the better ; and considering what law is in England, and what a tangled mass of enactments, statutes, and rulings there are, he must truly be a rash person who would thrust his hands into such a hornet's nest. Indeed, was there not once a learned judge who advised a friend who had lost a sum of money, which he hoped to regain by legal proceedings, that rather than try to recover this by such means, it would be far the wisest course for him to make a present of his loss and of just as much more to the defaulting debtor ! But it is evident that few are inclined to act on this principle, and it is fortunate for the lawyers that the long-suffering and the forgiving are so rare. Law in England is truly a tangled maze, which once entered few can get quit of without loss and discomfiture ; and the old saying that that man is a fool who has himself for his lawyer but too correctly emphasises an opinion which is as sound as it is general. In fact, in small or great disputes in England, it is almost absolutely necessary to take counsel and advice from those who have made legal knowledge their life-study. In India it is different ; for there, thanks to the efforts of Macaulay, Fitz-James Stephen, and other well-known legal reformers, the law has been so simplified and codified that the litigant, certainly in all petty civil cases, and nearly always in criminal cases, can very well, if need be, fight his own battles—that is, if he be a man of ordinary sense and capacity ; though it is not pretended but that the aid of a trained lawyer would frequently be of great importance—for there are legal quibbles in Indian just as there are in English courts ; and as small things make the sum of life, we must not exclude the quibble from our calculations, for on the legal quibble, as many can but too sorrowfully say, a great deal very often turns. Of late years, barristers and pleaders have been common, some think far too common, in our Indian courts, and there is hardly a large station wherein a magistrate holds his cutcherry where there is not a Bar of some sort. Now, the magistrate in India has multifarious duties to perform, and his legal business can but occupy a certain portion of his time. It is therefore incumbent on him to get through the said work as expeditiously as is possible. He welcomes with pleasure the appearance before him of the English barrister or pleader, or indeed of any of the many thoroughly respectable

native pleaders who undoubtedly exist; but it is with a cold shudder he sees approach him one of the lower rank and file, who is prepared to talk and argue to any amount—having been engaged on the principle of nothing being paid if the case is not won! have seen remarks made to the effect that it is a cruel shame to allow young English gentlemen to administer justice in a foreign country, the language of which they at first cannot possibly know, and of the customs of which they are almost entirely ignorant. And the monstrous injustice has been pointed out, of captains and majors and colonels sitting as judges, when their more legitimate duties lie elsewhere. Now, the young civilian always does know something of India and its languages before he leaves England, and on arrival in India he has for a year or more but the very simplest cases to try, wherein the exercise of common sense is mainly necessary; and he can indeed be no fool who has passed the complicated and difficult examinations by which alone can entry be obtained into the Indian Civil Service. Again, all his cases—and he has, as have all judicial officers, to take down the evidence in English while the vernacular clerk records this in the native character—are sent up each month to his superior to be rigorously overhauled, and every one of his decisions may be appealed against to an officer who is at the same station and who works in the same court-house. It is, therefore, hardly possible that he can go very far wrong in his decisions, or effect much, if any, permanent harm by an unwise order.

The case of the military officer in civil employ is very similar. When Lord Dalhousie annexed the Punjab, he could not get the Bengal civilian to work in the new province at the low rate of salary he proposed to give, and a great number of young military officers—such men, for instance, as Herbert Edwardes, Lake, Pollock, Reynall-Taylor, James, Nicholson, and subsequently many others, as Adams, Sandeman, and Cavagnari—were accepted as military civilians. Those were rough-and-ready days, and codes and laws in the Punjab were of the rudest description. But the system worked well, and a continuous stream of young military officers were brought into the Punjab civil commission. Gradually law and order took the place of license and disorder, and the new-comers, who had to begin at the very beginning just as does the young civilian who enters the service at this day, were from long practice and training perfectly qualified to perform the administrative and judicial duties of the frontier province. Of late years, but few military officers have been allowed to enter the Punjab Civil Commission; the reasons for this course are various, and I need not here enter into a discussion on the subject. There

is no doubt, however, that now there could be little object in heavily weighting the Punjab Commission with military men, though I cannot but think it would be unadvisable to altogether shut out military officers from civil employ. There is one curious fact with regard to the Punjab which is well worthy of note; its people are extremely loyal, and get on very well with the authorities and with Europeans generally; and one never in the Punjab hears, as one does elsewhere, of popular outbreaks, or risings in gaols, or gross incivilities to gentlemen travelling in the interior. And this is the more strange, for the Punjab is our latest acquisition, and the people have a very strong local feeling. But rulers and ruled get on excellently well together in the land of the Five Rivers; and I must say that a feeling of affection and regard exists between the English and the Punjabis which, in so far as I am aware, has not its counterpart in other parts of India. It may be that the memories of the great and good, such men as the Lawrences, Nicholson, Herbert Edwardes, and others of a like fibre, have very powerfully impressed a very impressionable people, who admire and honour the just and strong ruler; and it is not unlikely that the traditions of the heroic past—for indeed it was an heroic past—have become of essential service in the present day. There is a mixture of earnestness and yet childish wilfulness, with a dash of silly stupidity, about the Punjabi which has its amusing side, and these characteristics are often brought into strong relief in our law courts. A suitor disappointed of his ‘decree’ in the Chief Court once took a novel method of informing the public of his sentiments as to the density and darkness of the judicial mind in that tribunal. He solemnly lighted a vast torch outside the building, and paraded this up and down as a sort of practical hint that more light was required within! And in the Indian law courts there are many prototypes of Miss Flite. Indeed, so litigious is the native, that the only wonder is there are not more persons driven half crazy by their presumed wrongs. A white-bearded Sikh came to me one day with a piteous story that his son had been murdered! Full enquiries were made, and it turned out that the young fellow, who had long been ailing, had died in a natural manner when out with his cart conveying goods into Lahore. The old gentleman now asserted that his dead son had been robbed. This also was ascertained to be entirely incorrect. But the father was not going to be put off like this. He used to meet me every day as I drove up to court, and there and then he demanded justice. Arguments and expostulations were useless, and justice he would have. He was then recommended to try a civil suit for the recovery of the property. This he did, and his

claim was of course thrown out. He again appeared before me, humbly enquiring what he was to do now? He dodged me in the streets, he sat outside my house, and he waited to see me enter the cutcherry, and hung about till I came out. When I left Lahore I made my successor over to his kind attentions, and perhaps by this time the old gentleman has had the good sense to return to his native village. On another occasion a man used persistently to come into court and petition that some one else's well-rope had been stolen! It was of no use to try and induce the man to see that this was no business of his, for a few days after he would again present himself with just such another petition. Apparently this individual was in his right senses, and he certainly was never in any way offensive; but on the sixth or seventh time of his urging before me his feelings of annoyance at the disappearance of this wretched rope, I acted on the supposition of his being half-crazed and enquired if he knew the Civil Surgeon by sight? On his replying in the affirmative, I confidentially mentioned to him that if that official were any day to come into court, and were to learn what was going on, he would very probably think the presenter of such a petition a little weak in the head, and might see fit to send him to the Lunatic Asylum. 'Quite as a friend I mention this,' I said, 'and because personally I should be sorry to see you in trouble. So I advise you to drop this petitioning, or I can't answer for the consequences.' The man gave a furtive look round the court and slipped away. He never troubled me again.

Minor cases of assault are in India triable before a very junior magistrate, but it is sometimes advisable that these should be taken up by a senior officer. The Collector or Deputy Commissioner, as the case may be—the two terms being nearly synonymous¹—would ordinarily make over all such cases for disposal to one of his subordinates; but when he himself is in camp, and needless delay would be occasioned by sending the parties to the head-quarter station of the District, the Collector would meet the convenience of the litigants by hearing the case on the spot.

It must be remembered that the duty of the magistrate in India is to elicit the facts of every case before him, and that it is incumbent on him to obtain such answers from the parties as will show where the truth lies. This procedure in some measure converts the magistrate into prosecutor as well as judge, but it is the least of two evils to press for all the evidence procurable; for,

¹ In the Punjab and in Burmah and in so-called, but now improperly so-called, 'non-Regulation Provinces,' the head of the District is termed the Deputy Commissioner, whereas in Bengal, Bombay, &c., he is the Collector.

ignorant as the Indian peasant is, most cases would break down altogether were not the attention of the prosecutor and the witnesses directed to such points as may clearly set forth what has really transpired. There is of course the great danger in this of the magistrate, irritated by the stupidity or wilfulness of those before him, becoming something of a partisan for one side or the other; but practice corrects this tendency, and magistrates as a rule may be said to press for all the evidence they can get from either party, and then to cast aside all bias. And the fact of the English magistrate being almost always fair and impartial is a current belief with native suitors. I do not think I am saying too much when I assert this.—Let us take a case of common assault with the complainant at the bar, who proceeds after being sworn to tender his statement, which runs to the following effect:—

Jehan Khan (Complainant).—I am the son of Gholan Khan, and am a weaver of Kafirungpore. When sitting yesterday at my loom at about mid-day, Nubbi Buxsh came up to me and kicked me. I fell to the ground, when he beat me till I became insensible. No, I have no marks of injury to show. I can't in the least explain why he beat me!

Court.—Who knows of this assault?

Compt.—All the village knows.

Court.—But any particular persons in the village?

Compt.—Yes! there's a water-carrier.

Court.—What is his name?

Compt.—Ruheem Buxsh.

Court.—His father's name? ¹

Compt.—I don't know his father's name. But all the village can give evidence. I fell down and became quite insensible and—

Court.—Yes, yes, you have said all that before. Can you give the name of another person as a witness?

Compt.—No, I can't give another.

Court.—Then, this is your only witness?

Compt.—My lord! all the village can give evidence.

Court.—Then, give me the name of another witness.

Compt.—What for?

Court.—To prove you were assaulted.

Compt.—How can I give another name when all the people are my enemies?

Court.—Then, will Ruheem Buxsh give evidence for you?

Compt.—What evidence?

¹ In Indian courts, the names of the father of the parties, &c., is always entered in the record.

Court.—That you were assaulted ?

Compt.—God knows : I believe Ruheem Buxsh has been bought over. But the whole village knows what a bad character defendant bears.

Court.—Then, you have in fact no other witness but Ruheem Buxsh ?

Compt.—Oh yes, I have ! Jan Mahomed and Wulli Khan will give evidence for me.

Court.—What evidence ?

Compt.—That I am a man of good character.

Court.—But were they present at the attack on you ?

Compt.—How could they be ? They live twenty miles away !

Court.—Then, in fact, Ruheem Buxsh is your only witness ?

Compt. (*looking helplessly round and appealing to the vernacular writer*).—What does the sahib say ? I do not understand. (*Question repeated.*) Yes. Ruheem Buxsh is my witness. I want him called, and the head man of the village, and the village accountant.

Court.—Were these men present at the assault ?

Compt.—What assault ?

Court (*with much emphasis and with slow and distinct enunciation*).—The—assault—in—which—you—are—the—complainant. Now, take care what you are saying. I cannot stand much more of this sort of thing. Be careful !

Compt. (*in great distress*).—How have I offended your lordship ?

Court (*mollified*).—Well, were these present at the assault ?

Compt.—Which men ?

Court (*in wrath*).—O man without sense or understanding ! the head man and the village accountant ?

Compt.—Protector of the Poor ! how could these men have been present ?

Court.—Enough ! Senseless one ! (*Turning to defendant.*) Now, what has the defendant to say ?

The defendant, Nubbi Buxsh, then proceeds to deny categorically the charge laid against him, and declares he never touched complainant, who has trumped up this case from spite.

The first witness for the prosecution is then called in, and takes his place in the witness-box.

Court.—What is your name ?

Witness.—Ruheem Buxsh, son of Alum Khan.

Court.—Swear you will tell the truth.

Wit.—Yes.

Court.—Repeat after me what I say—‘ I swear I will speak the truth.’

Wit.—Yes.

Court.—Don't say 'Yes,' but repeat after me, 'I swear I will speak the truth.'

Wit.—Why should I not speak the truth? I never tell lies!

Court.—Attend to my order, and take the oath. (*After some fencing with the vernacular clerk, the witness is eventually sworn in due form.*)

Court.—Do you know anything of this case?

Wit.—Of which case?

Court.—Of the case in which Jehan Khan and Nubbi Buxsh are concerned.

Wit.—What should I know of this case?

Court.—Then, you don't know anything of these people?

Wit.—Of which people?

Court.—The people in court now present.

Witness (looks helplessly round, and says at last).—Oh yes, I know the complainant.

Court.—Can you say if he was assaulted?

Wit.—Who?

Court.—The complainant.

Wit.—Who should assault him?

Court.—The question is, were you present when he was assaulted?

Wit. (cautiously).—I know complainant bears a good character.

Def. (breaking out).—This witness is my enemy.

Court.—Are you at enmity with the defendant?

Wit.—With whom?

Court.—With the defendant.

Wit.—What defendant?

Court.—This man here, Nubbi Buxsh?

Wit.—That man!

Court.—Yes, that man.

Wit.—I never saw him before.

Def. (who has all this time been looking out of the window, and not in the least attending to witness).—Did not your grandmother marry complainant's brother's wife's uncle?

Wit.—I don't know.

Court to Wit.—Well, do you know anything of this assault case?

Wit.—What assault case?

Court.—This one in which complainant charges Nubbi Buxsh?

Wit.—What should I know of the case?

Compt. (screams out).—This man has been bought over by defendant!

Def. (also screams out).—This witness is my bitter enemy!

Court (gently to defendant).—The man has not said anything against you. Why all this excitement?

Def. (with tremendous energy).—All his family are a bad lot; his brother got three years for stealing, and his uncle was imprisoned for robbery!

Court to Def.—The man has said nothing against you. (*To witness.*) Then, you know nothing of this case?

Wit. (suddenly waking up).—Yes, I do. This Nubbi Buxsh attacked complainant with a stick and nearly killed him.

Court.—You saw all this?

Wit.—How could I see it, your highness? At that time I was in another village! Preserver of the Poor! your slave is telling the exact truth!

Court.—Then, you only heard this?

Compt. (who has not been paying attention).—This man has been bought over by defendant.

Court to Compt.—Senseless one! He has spoken, if anything, in your favour. Why do you talk such nonsense?

Compt. (putting his hands to his ears).—I have forgotten myself. May your lordship forgive me! If I say another word, order me to be taken out and hanged!

Court.—You deserve to be punished for so constantly interrupting. I warn you not to offend again. (*To witness.*) You saw nothing of this assault with your own eyes?

Wit.—Of what assault?

Court (losing all patience).—This assault concerning which you have been talking.

Wit.—How can I say anything? (*Turns round and begins to detail some village incident he considers apposite to the subject, but having really nothing to do with the business in hand.*)

Court.—Stop! We don't want that. You seem to know nothing. Stand down.

But enough has been recorded to show pretty conclusively that even in the hearing of such a petty case as the one detailed above there is an amount of cross-grained stupidity on the part of the witnesses which must often make it a hard business for the magistrate to keep his temper. And when it is recollected that the magistrate in the Punjab has to carry on his duties in a close crowded court during the hottest hours of the day, with the thermometer in the summer months hardly ever below 94° or 96°, it will be conceded that, like the policemen in the 'Pirates of Penzance,' his lot, enviable enough though it may be in some respects, is not also without its distinct drawbacks.

Cruel Barbara Allen.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTOPHER was a fiddler and a man of genius. Educated people do not deny the possibility of such a combination; but it was Christopher's misfortune to live amongst a dull and bovine-seeming race, who had little sympathy with art and no knowledge of an artist's longings. They contented themselves, for the most part, with the belief that Christopher was queer. Perhaps he was. My experience of men of genius, limited as it may be, points to the fact that oddity is a characteristic of the race. This observation is especially true of such of them as are yet unrecognised. They wear curious garments and their ways are strange. The outward and visible signs of their inward and spiritual graces are familiar to most observers of life, and the æsthetic soul recognises the meaning of their adornments of the hair and their puttings on of apparel. Genius may be said in these cases to be a sort of mental measles exhibited in sartorial form, and it may be supposed that but for their breaking out there would be some fear of their proving fatal. There are reasons for all things, if we could but find them; yet where is the social philosopher who will establish the nexus between a passion for Beethoven and the love of a bad hat? Why should a man who has perceptions of the beautiful fear the barber's shears? There were no social philosophers to speak of in the little country town in which Christopher was born and bred, and nobody in his case strove to solve these problems. Christopher was established as queer, and his townfolk were disposed to let him rest at that. His pale face was remarkable for nothing except a pair of dreamy eyes which could at times give sign of inward lightnings. His hair was lank; his figure was attenuated and ungraceful; he wore his clothes awkwardly. He was commonly supposed to be sulky, and some people thought his tone of voice bumptious and insolent. He was far from being a favourite, but those who knew him best liked him best, which is a good sign about a man. Everybody was compelled to admit that he was a well-conducted young man enough, and on Sundays he played the harmonium gratis at the little Independent chapel in which that pious and simple pair, his father and mother, had worshipped till their last illness. Over this instrument Christopher—let me

admit it—made wonderful eyes, sweeping the ceiling with a glance of rapture, and glaring through the boarders at the ladies' school (who sat in the front of the gallery) with orbs which seemed to see not. The young ladies were a little afraid of him, and his pallor and loneliness, and the very reputation he had for oddity, enlisted the sympathies of some of them.

Whatever tender flutterings might disturb the bosoms of the young ladies in the galleries, Christopher cared not. His heart was fixed on Barbara.

Barbara, who surely deserves a paragraph to herself, was provokingly pretty, to begin with, and she had a fascinating natural way which made young men and young women alike unhappy. She bubbled over—pardon this kitchen simile—with unaffected gaiety; she charmed, she bewitched, she delighted, she made angry and bewitched again. The young ladies very naturally saw nothing in her, but a certain pert forwardness of which themselves would not be guilty, though it should bring a world of young gentlemen sighing to their feet. Barbara was nineteen, and she had a voice which for gaiety and sweetness was like that of a thrush. Christopher had himself taught her to sing. His own voice was cacophonous and funereal, and it was droll to hear him solemnly phrasing 'I will enchant thine ear' for the instruction of his enchantress. But he was a good master, and Barbara prospered under him, and added a professional finish and exactness to her natural graces. She lived alone with an old uncle who had sold everything to buy an annuity, and she had no expectations from anybody.

Christopher had no expectations either, except of a stiff struggle with the world, but the two young people loved each other, and, having their choice of proverbs, they discarded the one which relates to poverty and a door and love and a window, and selected for their own guidance that cheerful saying which sets forth the belief that what is enough for one is enough for two. Christopher, therefore, bent himself like a man to earn enough for one, and up to the time of the beginning of this history had achieved a qualified failure. Barbara believed in his genius, but so far nobody else did, and the look-out was not altogether cheerful. Barbara's surname was Allen, but her godfathers and godmothers at her baptism had been actuated by no reminiscences of ballad poetry, and she was called Barbara because her godmother was called Barbara and was ready to present her with a silver caudle-cup on condition that the baby bore her name. Christopher knew the sweet and quaint old ballad, and introduced it to his love, who was charmed to discover herself like-named with a heroine

of fiction. She used to sing it to him in private, and sometimes to her uncle, but it was exclusively a home song. Christopher made a violin setting of it which Barbara used to accompany on the pianoforte, a setting in which the poor old song was tortured into wild cadenzas and dizzy cataracts of caterwaulings after the approved Italian manner.

The days went by, days that were halcyon under love's own sunshine. What matter if the mere skies were clouded, the mere material sun shut out, the wind bitter? Love can build a shelter for his votaries, and has a sunshine of his own. Still let me sing thy praises, gracious Love, though I am entering on the days of fogginess, and my minstrelsy is something rusty. I remember; I remember. Thou and I have heard the chimes at midnight, melancholy sweet.

'Barbara,' said Christopher, one evening, bending his mournful brows above her, 'we must part.'

'Nonsense!' said Barbara smilingly.

'There is no hope of doing anything here,' continued Christopher. 'I must face the world, and if there is anything in me, I must force the world to see it and to own it. I am going up to London.'

'To London?' asked Barbara, no longer smiling.

'To London,' said Christopher, quoting Mrs. Browning; 'to the gathering-place of souls.'

'What shall you do there, Christopher?' asked Barbara, by this time tremulous.

'I shall take my compositions with me,' he answered, 'and offer them to the publishers. I will find out the people who give concerts, and get leave to play. I will play at first for nothing: I can but try. If I fail, I fail. But there is nothing here to work upon. There is no knowledge of art and no love for it. I must have more elbow-room.'

Elbow-room is indispensable to a violinist, and Barbara was compelled to agree to her lover's programme. She was a brave little creature, and though she was as sorry to part with her lover as even he could wish her, she accepted the inevitable. Christopher finished his quarter's instructions where he had pupils, declined such few further engagements as offered themselves, packed up his belongings in a tin box somewhat too large for them, said farewell, and went his way to London. Barbara went with him by coach into the great neighbouring town five miles away, and saw him off by train. The times and the place where these two were bred were alike primitive, and this farewell journey had no shadow of impropriety in it even for the most censorious eyes.

The coach did not return till evening, and little Barbara had three or four hours on her hands. She walked disconsolately from the station, with her veil down to hide the few tears which forced themselves past her resolution. Scarcely noticing whither her feet carried her, she had wandered into a retired and dusty street which bore plainly upon its surface the unwritten but readable announcement of genteel poverty, and there in a parlour window was a largeish placard bearing this legend: 'Mrs. Lochleven Cameron prepares pupils for the Stage. Enquire Within.' A sudden inspiration entered Barbara's heart. She had seen the inside of a theatre once or twice, and she thought herself prettier and knew she could sing better than the singing chambermaid whom everybody had so applauded. Christopher had often defended the stage from the aspersions cast upon it by the ignorant prejudices of country-bred folk, who looked on the theatre as a device of the Arch-Enemy and an avenue to his halls of darkness. In pious varyings from church she had heard the Reverend Paul Screed compare the theatrical pit with that other pit of which the Enemy holds perpetual lease, but she respected Christopher's opinion more highly than that of the Reverend Paul. There was yet a sense of wickedness in the thought which assailed her, and her heart beat violently as she ascended the steps which led to Mrs. Lochleven Cameron's door. She dried her eyes, summoned her resolution, and rang the bell. A pale-faced lady of stately carriage opened the door.

'I wish,' said little Barbara, with a beating heart, 'to see Mrs. Cameron.'

'Pray enter,' returned the lady in tones so deep that she might have been a gentleman in disguise.

Barbara entered, and the deep-voiced lady closed the door, and led the way into a scantily furnished parlour, which held, amongst other objects, a rickety-looking grand piano of ancient make.

'Be seated,' said the deep-voiced lady. 'I am Mrs. Lochleven Cameron. What are your wishes?'

There was just a suspicion of Dublin in Mrs. Cameron's rich and rolling tones.

'You prepare pupils for the stage?' said Barbara. Her own clear and sweet voice sounded strange to her, as though it belonged to somebody else, but she spoke with outward calm.

'Do you wish to take lessons?' asked the lady.

'If I can afford to pay your terms,' said little Barbara.

'What can you do?' asked Mrs. Cameron with stage solemnity.

'Have you had any practice? Can you sing?'

'I do, not know what I can do,' said Barbara. 'I can sing a little.'

'Let me hear you,' said the deep voice; and the lady, with a regal gesture, threw open the grand piano.

Barbara drew off her thread gloves and lifted her veil, and then, sitting down to the piano, sang the piteous ballad of the Four Marys. Barbara knew nothing of the easy emotions of people of the stage, and she was almost frightened when, looking up timidly at the conclusion of the song, she saw that Mrs. Cameron was crying.

'Wait here a time, my dear,' said Mrs. Lochleven Cameron, regally business-like in spite of her tears, but with the suggestion of Dublin a trifle more developed in her voice.

She swept from the room, and closed the door behind her; and Barbara, not yet rid of the feeling that she was somebody else, heard Mrs. Cameron's voice, somewhat subdued, calling 'Joe.'

'What is it?' asked another deep voice, wherein the influences of Dublin and the stage together struggled.

'Come down,' said Mrs. Cameron; and in answer to this summons a solemn footstep was heard upon the stair. Barbara heard the sound of a whispered conference outside, and then, the door being opened, Mrs. Cameron ushered in a gentleman tall and lank and sombre. Like Mrs. Cameron, he was very pale, but in his case the pallor of his cheeks was intensified by the blackness of his hair and the purple-black bloom upon his chin and upper lip. He looked to Barbara like an undertaker who mourned the stagnation of trade. To you or me he would have looked like what he was, a second- or third-rate tragedian.

'I have not yet the pleasure of your name,' said Mrs. Lochleven Cameron, addressing Barbara.

'My name is Barbara Allen,' said Barbara, speaking it unconsciously as though it were a line of an old ballad.

'This, Miss Allen,' said Mrs. Cameron with a sweep of the right hand which might have served to introduce a landscape, 'is Mr. Lochleven Cameron.'

Barbara rose and curtsied, and Mr. Lochleven Cameron bowed. Barbara concluded that this was *not* the gentleman who had been called downstairs as 'Joe.'

'Will you sing that little ballad over again, Miss Allen?' asked Mrs. Cameron, gravely seating herself.

Barbara sang the ballad over again, and sang it rather better than before.

Mrs. Cameron cried again, and Mr. Cameron said 'Bravo!' at the finish.

'Now,' said Mrs. Cameron, 'do you know anything sprightly?' She pronounced it 'sproightly,' but she was off her guard.

Barbara, by this time only enough excited to do her best, sang 'Come lasses and lads,' and sang it like herself, with honest mirth and rural roguishness. For without knowing it, this young lady was a born actress, and did by nature and beautifully what others are taught to do awkwardly.

'You'll have to broaden the style a little for the theatre,' said the tragédienne, 'but for a small room nothing could be better.'

'I venture to predict,' said the tragedian, 'that Miss Allen will become an ornament to the profession.'

'I am afraid,' said Barbara, rising from the piano, 'that after all I may be only wasting your time. I have not asked your terms, and—I am—I have not much money.'

'Miss Allen,' said the tragedian, 'unless I am much mistaken, you will not long have to mourn that unpleasant condition of affairs.'

'Are your parents aware of your design, Miss Allen?' This from the lady.

'I have no parents,' faltered Barbara. 'I am living with my uncle.'

'Does he know your wishes in this matter?'

'No,' said Barbara, and the feeling of guilt returned.

'If he is willing to entrust you to my tuition,' said Mrs. Lochleven Cameron, 'I should be willing to instruct you without charge on condition that you bound yourself to pay to Mr. Cameron one-third of your earnings for the first three years.'

This opened up a vista to Barbara, but she was certain that her uncle would give his consent to no such arrangement.

'You had better lay the matter before your uncle, Miss Allen,' said the tragedian. 'Without his consent, Mrs. Lochleven Cameron could not see her way to an arrangement. She is aware—as I am—of the undeserved stigma which has been cast upon the profession by bigotry and ignorance. She has no respect for the prejudice—nor have I—but she will not violate the feelings of those who are so unfortunate as to suffer under it.'

'Ye're quite right, Joe,' said Mrs. Cameron colloquially, and then, with added grandeur, to Barbara, 'Mr. Lochleven Cameron expresses me own feelings admirably.'

Barbara made no reply. It would have been sweet to work for Christopher even by so audacious a means as going on the stage. But the vision crumbled when she thought of her uncle. She dropped her veil and drew on her gloves slowly, and as she did so a rapid step ascended to the front door, there came the click of a

latch-key, the slam of the street door as it closed, and then, with an imperative knock which awaited no answer, a young man rushed into the room and shouted,

‘Done at last!’

There was triumph in this young man’s eyes, and the flush of triumph on his cheek. He was a handsome young fellow of perhaps five-and-twenty, with a light curling beard and a great blonde moustache. His clothes were a little seedy, but he looked like a gentleman. He did not notice Barbara, and the tragedian and his wife apparently forgot her presence.

‘You don’t mean——?’ began Mrs. Lochleven Cameron.

‘But I do mean it,’ cried the new-comer. ‘Rackstraw has taken it. It is to be put in rehearsal on Monday, and billed for Monday week. How’s that for high, eh?’

‘Good, dear boy, good!’ said the tragedian, and the two shook hands.

‘But that’s not all,’ said the new-comer. ‘Milford was there.’

‘The London Milford?’ asked Mr. Cameron.

‘The London Milford,’ said the other. ‘Milford of the Garrick. He heard me read it, prophesied a great run for it, has promised to come down again and see it, and if it fulfils his hopes of it, means to take it up to town. In fact, it’s as good as settled.’

‘I congratulate ye, me boy,’ said Mr. Cameron. ‘I knew ye’d hit ’em one of these fine days. I knew ut.’

Through all this, which she only half understood, Barbara was silent. She took advantage of the lull which followed the tragedian’s expression of friendly triumph to recall Mrs. Cameron to the knowledge of her presence.

‘I will speak to my uncle,’ she said, ‘and I will write to you.’

The stranger looked round when she spoke, and snatched his hat off. Barbara bent her head in general salutation and went her way. When she left the street, she could scarcely believe that it had not all been a dream. It was so unlike herself to do anything so bold. She felt more and more guilty as she waited for the coach, more and more afraid of confiding to her uncle such a scheme as that she had so hastily formed. When she reached home she made one or two inward overtures towards the attempt, but her courage failed her, and she kept silence. Yet she used to think sometimes that if she had the power to shorten poor Christopher’s struggles, it was almost a crime not to do it.

CHAPTER II.

WE who live in London know well enough that its streets are not paved with gold. If one had asked Christopher his opinion on that point, he would no doubt have laughed at the childishness of the question, yet he came up to London with all the confidence and certainty which the old childish belief could have inspired. He was coming to make his fortune. That went without saying. He was brim-full of belief in himself, to begin with. 'The world's mine oyster,' he thought, as the cheap parliamentary train crawled from station to station. The world is *my* oyster, for that matter, but the edible mollusc is hidden, and the shell is uninviting. Christopher found the mollusc very shy, the shell innutritive.

Publishers did not leap at the organ fugue in C as they ought to have done. They skipped not in answer to the *adagio* movement in the May-day Symphony. The oratorio conjured no money from their pockets—for the most part, they declined to open the wrapper which surrounded it, or to see it opened. Poor Christopher, in short, experienced all the scorn which patient merit of the unworthy takes, and found his own appreciation of himself of little help to him. His money melted—as money has a knack of melting when one would least wish to see it melt. Oxford Street became to him as stony-hearted a step-mother as it was to De Quincey, and at melancholy last—while his letters to Barbara became shorter and fewer—he found an enforced way to the pawnbroker's, whither went all which his Uncle's capacious maw would receive; all, except the beloved violin which had so often sung to Barbara, so often sounded Love's sweet lullaby in the quiet of his own chamber. *That* he could not part with, for he was a true enthusiast when all was told. So he went about hungry for a day or two.

I have hurried a little in telling his story in order that I might get the worst over at once.

Two months before he came to this sad pass he was standing one cold night in front of the Euston Road entrance to the great terminal station, when the sound of a violin struck upon his ears, played as surely a violin was never played in the streets before. The performer, whoever he might be, slashed away with a wonderful merry abandonment, playing the jolliest tunes, until he had a great crowd about him, on the outskirts of which girls with their arms embracing each other swung round in time to the measured madness of the music. The close-pent crowd beat time with hand

and foot, sometimes this rude accompaniment almost drowned the music:—

An Orpheus ! An Orpheus ! He worked on the crowd ;
He swayed them with melody merry and loud.

The people went half wild over this street Paganini. They laughed with him and danced to his music until their rough acclamation almost made the music dumb. Then suddenly he changed his theme, and the sparkle went out of the air and left it dim and foggy as it was by nature, and by-and-by added a deeper gloom to it. For he played a ghostly and weird and awful theme, which stilled merriment and chilled jollity, and seemed to fill the night with phantoms. It made a very singular impression indeed upon Christopher's nerves. Christopher was not so well nourished as he might have been, and when a man's economy plays tricks with his stomach, the stomach is likely to pass the trick on with interest. He stood amazed—doubtful of his ears, of the street, of the people, of his own identity. For that weird and awful theme was his own, and, which made the thing more wonderful, he had never even written it down. And here was somebody playing it note for note, a lengthy and intricate composition which set all theory of coincidence utterly aside. Nobody need wonder at Christopher's amazement.

The street fiddler played the theme clean out, and then passed through the crowd in search of coppers. It furnished a lesson worth his learning that, while he abandoned himself to mirth, the coppers had showered into the hat at his feet in tinkling accompaniment to his strains ; and that now the weird and mournful theme had sealed generosity's fountain as with sudden frost. The musician came at last, hat in hand, to Christopher. He was a queer figure. His hair was long and matted, his eyes were obscured by a pair of large spectacles of darkened glass, and his coat collar was turned up to the tops of his ears. A neglected-looking beard jutted out from the opening in the collar, and not a feature but the man's nose was visible. The crowd had gone ; looking round, one could scarcely have suspected that the crowd had been there at all a minute before.

'That was a curious theme you played last of all,' said Christopher. 'Was it your own ?'

'No,' said the musician, chinking together the coppers in his felt hat as a reminder of the more immediate business in hand.

'Whose was it ?' asked Christopher, ignoring the hat.

'Don't know, I'm sure,' the musician answered shortly, and turned away.

There was nobody left to appeal to, so, putting his fiddle and bow under his arm, he emptied the coppers into his trousers' pockets, and, putting on his hat, made away in the direction of King's Cross. Christopher followed at a little distance, wonder-stricken still, and half disposed to return to the charge again. The musician, reaching the corner of Gray's Inn Road, turned. This was Christopher's homeward way, and he followed. By-and-by the fiddler made a turn to the right. This was still Christopher's homeward way, and still he followed. By-and-by the man stopped before a door and produced a latch-key. The house before which he stood was that in which Christopher lodged. He laid a hand upon the fiddler's shoulder.

'Do you live here?' he said.

'What has that to do with you?' retorted the fiddler.

'That was my theme you played,' said Christopher; 'and if you live here, I know how you got hold of it. You have heard me play it.'

'You live on the third floor?' said the other in a changed tone.

'Yes,' said Christopher.

'I'm in the attics, worse luck to me,' said the street player.

'Come into my room, if you don't mind.'

He opened the door and went upstairs in the darkness, with the assured step of custom. Christopher, less used to the house, blundered slowly upwards after him.

'Wait a minute,' said the occupant of the attic, 'and I'll get a light.'

There was a little pause, and then came the splutter of a match. The pale glow of a single candle lit the room dimly. Christopher jumped at the sight of a third man in the room. No! There were but two people there. But where, then, was the man who had led him hither? Here before him was a merry-looking youngster of perhaps two-and-twenty, with a light brown moustache and eyes grey or blue, and close-cropped fair hair. The hirsute and uncombed genius of the street had vanished.

'Don't stare like that, sir,' said the transformed comically. 'Here are the props.' He held up a ragged wig and beard.

'The what?' asked Christopher.

'The props,' returned the other. 'Props are properties. Properties are theatrical belongings. There's nothing diabolical or supernatural about it. Wait a minute, and I'll light the lamp and set the fire going.'

Christopher stood in silence whilst his new acquaintance bustled about the room. The lamp cast a full and mellow light

over the whole apartment, and the fire began to crackle and leap merrily.

'Sit down,' said the host, and Christopher obeyed. 'I always like to take the bull by the horns,' the host continued with a little blush. 'I didn't want to be found out at this game, but you have found me out, and so I make the best of it, and throw myself upon your confidence.' He took up the wig and beard lightly between his finger and thumb and dropped them again, laughing and blushing.

'You may rely upon me,' said Christopher in his own dogged and sulky tones. 'If I wanted to tell of it, I know nobody in London.'

'That was your theme, was it?' said the host, throwing one leg over the other and nursing it with both hands.

'Yes,' said Christopher; 'you played it very accurately: you must have a very fine memory.'

'I suppose I have,' said the other, with a little laugh. 'But it's a wonderful thing.'

'Do you think so?' asked Christopher, blushing with pleasure.

'I do indeed,' his new acquaintance answered. 'Play something else of yours.'

There was a bed in one corner of the room, and on this he had laid the instrument and the bow when he came in. He arose now and proffered them to Christopher. Christopher took them from his outstretched hand and played. The other listened, nursing his leg again, and nodding at the fire, in time to the music.

'You write better than you play,' he said at length, with more candour than was altogether agreeable. 'Not that your playing isn't good, but it misses—just misses—the real grip—the real royal thing. Only one player in a million has it.'

'Do you think you have it?' asked Christopher, not sneeringly, though the words might imply a sneer, but speaking because he was shy and felt bound to say something.

'I?' said the other, with a merry laugh. 'O Lord, no! A man can't bring out more than there is in him. There's no divine melody in *me*. Good spirits now and then, a bit of sentiment now and then, a dash more or less of the devil now and then—that's all I'm equal to. If I could have written that gavotte of yours, I could knock sparks out of people with it. Here! lend me the fiddle.'

He played it through with the grave-faced merriment proper to it, and here and there with such a frolicking forth of sudden

laughter and innocent fun as gave gravity the lie and made the pretence of it dearly droll.

'That's it,' he said, looking up with naïve triumph when he had finished.

Yes, that was it, Christopher confessed, as he took back the violin and bow and laid them on the table.

'What brings a man who plays as you do, playing in the streets?' he asked a little sulkily.

'That eternal want of pence which vexes fiddlers,' said the youngster. 'I lost an engagement a month ago. First violin at the Garrick. Rowed with the manager. Nothing else turned up. Must make money somehow.'

'What have you made to-night?' Christopher asked. 'I beg your pardon,' he said a second later; 'that is no business of mine, of course.'

'About seven or eight shillings,' said the other, disregarding the withdrawal of the question. 'And I won't ask you,' he went on, 'what brings a man who writes like you living near the clouds in a street like this?'

'Are you an Englishman?' asked Christopher.

'No,' said the other. 'No fiddler ever was. I beg your pardon. I oughtn't to have said that, even though I think it. No. I am a Bohemian, blood and bones, but I came to England when I was eight years old, and I have lived in London ever since.'

They went on talking together, and laid the foundations of a friendship which afterwards built itself up steadily. In two months' time Carl Rubach was restored to his old place at the Garrick, and poor Christopher was beginning to find out in real earnest what it was to be hungry. He was too proud to ask anybody for a loan, and Rubach was the only man he really knew. 'When things are at their worst,' says the cynical bard, 'they sometimes mend.' Things suddenly mended for Christopher. The Bohemian turned up one afternoon with an Englishman in his train, a handsome young fellow of perhaps five-and-twenty, with a light curling beard and a blonde moustache.

'Allow me to introduce to you Mr. John Holt,' said the Bohemian. 'This, Mr. Holt, is Mr. Christopher Stretton, a musician of great genius. This—Stretton—is Mr. John Holt, a dramatist of great power. Gentlemen, know each other. Mr. Holt writes charming songs. Mr. Stretton writes beautiful music.'

He flourished with mock gravity as he said these things, turning first to one and then to the other. Mr. John Holt's eyes were keen and observant; and one swift glance took in the knowledge

of the composer's hungry pallor, his threadbare dress, the bare and poverty-stricken aspect of the room.

'I have two songs for a new play of mine,' he said; 'I want them set to music.'

Christopher's hand, thinner and more transparent than a healthy man's hand should be, reached out for the offered manuscripts.

'When do you think you can let me have the music?' asked the dramatist.

Christopher read the songs through, and looked up.

'To-morrow?' he said.

'So soon!' said the other. 'At what time to-morrow?'

'Will midday suit you?'

'Can you bring them to that address?'

'I will be there,' responded Christopher.

His visitors left him and he sat down to think. He was weak, and the pains of hunger gnawed him, but as he sat over one of the songs the words built themselves into a tune almost without his knowledge or effort. Then he turned to write, and found that he had no music-paper. He laughed bitterly at this discovery, and looking round the bare apartment sighted his violin-case, and rising, took the violin and bow out of it, put on his hat, and, with the case under his arm, made for the pawnbroker's. There he realised half-a-crown, one halfpenny of which was confiscated in payment for the pawn-ticket. He bought paper and pen and ink, and having taken them home, came out again and ate cold sausage at the bar of a public-house, and came back with a few pence still in his pockets. There was a nausea upon him, and he could not recall the air he wished to write. He had eaten nothing for three days, and he felt at once sick and drowsy. He was fain to lie down, and then he fell asleep to awake in two hours' time a little strengthened and refreshed. The tune came back again, and he set it down, and then attacked the second song with like success.

Morning came, and after a meagre breakfast which finished his resources, he went weakly to the address the dramatist had given him. Mr. Holt had left behind him apologies for unavoidable absence. Would Mr. Stretton call again at three? He wandered desolately home, and waited, and when the time drew near set out again. This time the dramatist was ready to receive him.

'The lady who will sing the songs is here,' he said, 'and with your permission I will ask her to try them over now. Will you come with me?'

'I would rather await you here,' said Christopher. The tunes

he had written were running riot in his head, and he thought them puerile, vulgar, shameful. He would have torn the papers on which they were written if he had not already surrendered them. He had liked them an hour ago, and now he thought them detestable.

‘As you please,’ said the dramatist, and added ‘poor beggar!’ inwardly as he went upstairs.

The composer sat in a sick half-dream and faintly heard a piano sounding in a distant room. It played the prelude of one of his songs. Now and then the sound of a female voice just touched his ears. He was so fatigued and weak that, in spite of his anxiety, he glided into a troubled doze in which he dreamed of Barbara. The dramatist returned, and Christopher came back to the daylight at the sound of the opening door.

‘Mademoiselle Hélène and myself,’ said Mr. Holt, ‘are alike delighted with your setting of the songs. I shall ask you, Mr. Stretton, to read my comedy and to write the whole of the incidental music, if you will accept the commission. We can talk over terms afterwards. In the mean time, shall I offer you a cheque for ten guineas?’

‘Thank you,’ said Christopher. He took the cheque and walked to the bank, which was near at hand in Pall Mall, received his money, and plunged into an eating-house, whence he emerged intoxicated by the absorption of a cup of coffee and a steak. If you doubt the physical accuracy of that statement, pray reduce yourself to Christopher’s condition and experiment upon yourself. You are respectfully assured that you will doubt no longer.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTOPHER wrote the incidental music for the new comedy and composed an overture and *entr’actes* for it—work for which he was paid pretty liberally. He wrote to Barbara of his better fortunes, and promised to run down to see her so soon as the business strain was over. But the business strain was over and he did not go. He finished his music, rehearsed it once with the orchestra of the Garrick Theatre, and then fell ill of a low fever through which Rubach most kindly nursed him. The Bohemian himself was busy, rehearsing half the day and playing at the theatre at night, but he gave all his spare time to his friend. I had forgotten to tell you that, for convenience’ sake, they had quitted their old lodgings, and had taken chambers off the Strand, within three minutes’ easy walk of the house. It was here that Christopher fell ill.

When he grew a little better, the Bohemian rather began to aggravate him. Rubach talked of the new piece and its heroine, and of nothing but the new piece and its heroine. He was enraptured with her. He confessed himself overhèad in love. So charming, so dainty, so sweet, so *piquante*, so lovable was Mademoiselle Hélène. Rubach, half in earnest, half in jest, confessed himself hopeless. Mademoiselle was engaged to Mr. Holt the dramatist.

‘And even if she were not,’ he said, ‘is it likely she would look at a poor wretch of a fiddler? She is going to make her fortune. She is going to be the rage. She has never played before, but she sings like a lark, like a linnet, like a nightingale; and she walks the boards as naturally as if she had been born upon them. She is English too, in spite of her foreign name. Why on earth do professional English people take foreign names?’

‘I don’t know, I’m sure,’ said Christopher wearily. ‘I should like to go to sleep.’

While the sick man slept or made believe to sleep, Rubach was quiet as a mouse; but when he awoke or seemed to awake, the ecstatic praises began again, until, before the public knew more of the new actress than her name, our poor invalid was sick of her and of her praises to the very soul.

He tried, however, to take some interest in the piece, and as he became stronger he began to grow a little anxious about his own share in its success. When the eventful night came he was able to sit up for an hour before the piece began, and Rubach had to leave him. It was midnight before the faithful chum returned, and after looking in on the invalid who seemed to slumber calmly, sat down for a final pipe by his own bedside. But Christopher was only ‘playing ’possum,’ as our playful American cousins put it, and, his anxiety over-riding his desire for quiet, he called out,

‘Is that you, Carl?’

‘Yes,’ said the other, hastening into his room on tiptoe. ‘I thought you were asleep.’

‘How did the music go?’

‘Capitally. Both the songs repeated. The overture and the second *entr’acte* would have been redemanded at a concert, but of course the play was the thing. Such a success, Stretton! Such a *furore*! She is a little goddess, a queen. You should see her and hear her! Ah me!’—with a comic ruefulness—‘Holt should be a happy man.’

Christopher, warned by his outbreak, which he knew by old experience to be the merest exordium, ‘played ’possum’ again,

with such success that Rubach left him and he went to sleep in earnest.

Holt came to see him next day, and brought the morning papers with him. The musician and he began to talk about writing an English opera together, and Christopher brightened at the scheme, which opened up the road to all his old ambitions.

'You are getting stronger now,' said Holt. 'We shall have you in to see the piece by-and-by.'

'I shall come in a day or two,' said Christopher; and when his visitor had gone, sat down to read over and over again the reviews of his own work. How they would gladden Barbara, he thought. How proud she would be of his success! how eager to hear the music! He laid a romantic little plot for her pleasure. He would run down when he got stronger, and compel Barbara and her uncle on a visit to town. He would convey them to the theatre, and when Barbara was quite in love with the music he would tell her that he himself had written it. How well the songs would suit her voice, and how charmingly she would sing them to him! Pleasant fancies, such as lovers have, floated through his mind. He took up his violin for the first time for a month, and played through the old tune, 'Cruel Barbara Allen.' Rubach came in and found him thus employed.

'You are getting on, my boy,' said the good Bohemian. 'Can you come and see the piece to-night? Are you strong enough?'

'Not to-night,' Christopher returned. 'In a day or two.' And he went on playing 'Cruel Barbara Allen' dreamily.

'What is that?' said Rubach with a wry grin. 'Is not twice or thrice of it enough?'

Christopher laid down the instrument with a smile. When Carl had left him he took it up again and played over to himself the songs Barbara used to sing. He was weak and could not play for any great length of time together, but he played every now and then a melody, and in a while he got back again to 'Cruel Barbara Allen.' Back came Carl as he played it.

'That tune again! what is it?'

'An old ballad,' answered Christopher. '"Cruel Barbara Allen."'

He found a pleasure in speaking her name aloud in this veiled way.

'Let the girl alone,' said Carl. 'I am tired of her.'

'I am not,' said Christopher with a weak little chuckle, 'and I have known her since she was a child.'

He began to play the air again, and Carl took away the violin with simulated theatric anger. But Carl's treatment of the name

of the ballad as though it were the name of a girl still extant gave Christopher a temptation, and he played the air once or twice again in Carl's presence.

'You are passionately attached to Miss Allen,' said Carl.'

'She is the only sweetheart I ever had,' responded simple Christopher with shy merriment.

Rubach sat down at the piano and sang this song:—

Through all the green glad summer-time
Love told his tale in dainty rhyme,
And sighed his loves out one by one.
There lives no echo of his laugh,
I but record his epitaph,
And sigh for love worn out and gone.

For love endures for little time,
But dies with every change of rhyme,
And lives again with every one.
And every new-born love doth laugh
Above his brother's epitaph,
The last light love worn out and gone.

'That is not your doctrine, *mon ami*,' he said as he turned round on the music-stool. 'You are faithful to Miss Allen.'

'I am faithful to Miss Allen, certainly,' said Christopher, reaching out his hand for the violin, and again chuckling weakly.

'No,' said Carl, rising and confiscating the fiddle. 'You shall sing her virtues to that tune no more. Write a new tune for her.'

Anybody who has been in love, and I do not care for any other sort of reader, may fancy for himself the peculiar enjoyment which shy Christopher extracted from this homely *badinage*.

Two or three days later he was almost re-established, and had indeed begun to write a little. He would not yet go to the theatre, however, having some fear of the excitement. He sat alone in the sitting-room which he and his chum occupied in common, dreaming of Barbara over a book, and building cloud palaces. It was but ten o'clock in the evening, and Carl would not be home till midnight. Then who was this dashing tumultuously up the stone steps after Carl's accustomed fashion? Carl himself, it seemed, but unlike himself, pale and breathless, and with an ugly scratch across his forehead which looked at first sight like a severe wound.

'What's the matter?' cried Christopher, rising hastily.

'I have had a fall,' said Carl. 'There is nothing to be alarmed at, but,' holding out his left hand, 'I have sprained my wrist and I cannot play.'

'How did it happen?' asked Christopher, following him into the bedroom where Carl had already begun to twine a wet handkerchief round the injured wrist.

'I was crossing the stage between the acts,' said Carl; 'a plank had been moved, and I set my foot in the hole and fell—*voilà tout*. I want to ask you to play for me. There is not a man in the band who can do justice to "When Love has flown." It will be no trouble to you. You will simply have to stand in the flies and play the air whilst a man on the stage appears to play it, sawing away with a soaped bow. Will you come?'

Christopher stood irresolute.

'They can do without me in the orchestra,' said Carl, 'but I have been playing your song as it deserves to be played. Mademoiselle Hélène looks forward to its being played so. It gives her aid, I know. The people look to hear it well played, and if you do not go it will be given to Jones—to Jones, Gott in Himmel! who plays as a mason cuts stone. Do come. It will cost you no trouble.'

Christopher took up his violin-case, long since extracted from My Uncle's maw, and followed Carl from the chambers into the street.

'You play only the first movement, very low and soft,' said Carl as they went along. 'I will stand by you and tell you when to begin.'

They entered the theatre—a terra incognita to Christopher—and found their way through a chaos of disused dusty scenery. A great burst of applause sounded through the unseen house.

'That is for Mademoiselle,' said Carl. 'We are just in time to get breath comfortably. Stay here. I will be with you directly.'

He left Christopher standing in the flies, looking on the stage. There were two or three people on the boards, but Christopher had not the key to their talk, and had little interest in them. By-and-by all but one left the stage. The light dwindled and faded. The sun-sets on the English stage are as rapid as in any tropic region. The player played his part. He was in love, and true as true could be, but the empress of his soul had her doubts about him. How could she doubt him? That was the burden of his speech as he sat at the table, and murmured the loved one's cruelty with a broken voice and his whole function suiting with forms to his conceit. It was almost dark when the first rays of the silver moon fell athwart the chamber. Christopher felt that the dead silence of the house betokened the coming of the crisis in the play, and he was strung to the expectation of something out of the

common. Watching from his own dark standing-place, he could see the actor draw towards him a violin case, and he silently drew forth his own instrument to be in readiness. Whilst he waited and watched, Carl's stealthy footstep sounded behind him.

'You will see her in a minute or two,' whispered Carl. 'I will touch you once when you shall make ready, and once when you shall begin.'

For half a minute or nearly, everything was still on the stage and in the house. Then the player's voice, passionate and low, broke again upon the silence, and in a second or two Carl touched Christopher upon the shoulder. There was a curiously *crisp* feeling in the composer's nerves, and he was a little excited. He tucked his violin under his chin, and stood prepared. Into the definite band of moonlight which crossed the stage glided suddenly a white figure.

'Now,' whispered Carl, and touched the musician on the shoulder, and straight from the violin soared a voice, not soft and low, but clear and loud, and the air was 'Cruel Barbara Allen.' Carl fell back a step or two in his amazement. The white figure on the stage turned round, and for a moment peered into the darkness of the flies—then glided on again. The air once played, the composer cast his violin upon the stage beneath his feet and trampled it, hurled the bow from him, and with one cry, eloquent of agony and rage, turned and dashed past his companion, and, stumbling through the dark and unaccustomed ways, reached the street. Carl followed him and caught him up.

'What is it, Stretton? What is the matter?' he cried, and seized his friend by the arm. Christopher answered nothing, but hurried on like one distracted. 'He's mad,' said Carl within himself—'quite mad.'

They came together to their chambers, and Christopher sank into an arm-chair and moaned, unconscious of Carl's presence,

'Barbara! Barbara!'

'It is madness,' said Carl, tossing his hands tempestuously towards the ceiling, 'mere midsummer madness. Poor fellow! Stretton! Stretton! Listen to me! What is it? Don't you know me?'

For Christopher glared at him like one who had no knowledge of him, and then again hid his face within his hands.

'What on earth made you play that tune?' cried Carl.

'She was there, man! She was there!' groaned Christopher, rising and pacing the room with unequal steps.

'Who was there?' said Carl, almost as wildly.

'Barbara,' groaned Christopher again. 'Mademoiselle Hélène is Barbara Allen.'

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" murmured the theatrical Carl. 'I must humour him. Never mind, old man. Suppose she is! what does it matter?'

'Oh, Carl! Carl!' cried the other, turning upon him and gripping him by both shoulders. 'I never loved another woman, and I never can. I would have built my hopes of Heaven upon her truth.'

Carl began to think there was something in it.

'You mean that Mademoiselle Hélène is Miss Allen?'

'Yes, I said so.'

'And that you knew her?'

'We were sweethearts when we were children. We were engaged to be married two years ago. Would you believe it, Carl? would you believe it? I had a letter from her only this morning dated from the old place in the country. Think of the cunning perfidy of it!'

'How long can she have known Holt?' asked Carl, rather to himself than Christopher.

'Why, how can I tell?' said the musician, groaning. 'She has deceived me all along.'

There was no present consolation possible, and Carl had the sense to see it. He lit a pipe and watched his unhappy friend sympathetically. Christopher went up and down the room exclaiming here and there against the perfidy of woman. There came an imperious summons at the door.

'Don't let him in, whoever it is,' said Christopher.

Somebody kicked the door and roared 'Rubach!'

'It's Milford,' said Carl; 'the manager. There's going to be a row. A bit of a row will do you good, my poor fellow. I shall let him in.'

So said, so done. Enter Milford the lordly, in a towering rage, followed by Holt, evidently disposed to appease his manager's wrath.

'I have called,' said the manager, blowing hard and fixing a savage eye on Carl, 'to know what the devil you mean, sir, by turning the theatre into a bear-garden?'

'My good sir——' said Carl with Continental affability.

'Don't "good sir" me, sir,' cried the manager. 'What the devil do you mean, sir?'

'This is a matter for commiserations, sir, not for anger,' Carl began.

Then the great man began to swear, and did it well and fluently,

with *gusto*. When he had done, he collected himself and shook his fist at Carl with a final admonition.

'Don't you come near my theatre again, you—you foreign rascal.'

'It is I who am to blame,' said Christopher, 'and not he. It was I who played for him, and who—in short, I am to blame.'

The manager glared speechlessly for a moment, and then gasped,

'Explain, sir.'

'Mr. Rubach,' said Christopher, 'had sprained his wrist by a fall this evening. He came to me and requested me to play for him behind the scenes in the last act. You know what happened. *That* I cannot explain.'

The situation was awkward for everybody. If Barbara's perfidy had sullied his own life and left him desolate, Christopher could still speak no evil of her in the presence of the man for whom she had jilted him. Carl's tongue was tied by his regard for Holt's feelings. The manager naturally wanted to get at the bottom of the situation, and the dramatist felt that a friend whom he was learning to value had somehow imperilled his play. All four stood silent, and footsteps came leisurely up the stone stairs, and were heard very distinctly in the stillness. The door had been left open, but one of the new-comers stopped to tap at it.

'Come in,' cried Carl, ready to welcome any diversion.

A red face and a grey head came round the door.

'Does Mr. Stretton——? Oh! Chris, my boy, how are you?'

No other a person than Barbara's uncle.

'I've brought Barbara to see you. Come in, Barbara. Why, what's the matter?'

Christopher turned away from Barbara, as she approached him, veiled, and walked to the window, through which he looked on the night, seeing nothing.

'Chris!' said Barbara, in a pathetic, wounded voice. 'Chris!' Mechanically she raised her veil and looked round upon her uncle with a pale scared face.

'Stretton!' roared Carl, leaping at him and laying forcible hands upon him, forgetful of his own sprained wrist. 'Is this Miss Allen?'

'Yes,' said Christopher, with a sob which would have way in spite of him.

'Then it isn't Mademoiselle Hélène,' said Carl.

Christopher turned with bewildered looks.

'Tell me,' he said to Barbara wildly, 'are you playing at the Garrick Theatre?'

'You've been a-drinking, Christopher,' said Barbara's uncle plaintively.

'No,' said Barbara, frightened as she well might be at the presence of strangers at this curious scene, and at the scene itself. 'Uncle had business in London, and he brought me with him this afternoon. We heard that you had written the music to a play, and we went to hear it. We—we thought you would be conducting, and that I should see you there.'

Little Barbara put up her hands and began to cry.

'Sir,' said Carl to the manager, 'I ask you, as the first step towards the understanding of this business, to admit that the likeness between this young lady and Mademoiselle Hélène is very remarkable and close.'

'Very remarkable!' said the manager.

'Wonderful!' said Mr. Holt.

'Me and my niece have been a-laughing at it and a-noticing of it all the evening,' said Barbara's uncle.

Carl told the story.

'I'll have it in the papers,' said Milford the manager. 'Stunning good advertisement! Eh? No names, of course. Oh dear, no; no names!'

Then the manager and the dramatist suddenly felt themselves *de trop*, and Carl, catching the infection, went with them.

'Can you forgive me for doubting you?' said Christopher. 'It was I who suffered by it.'

'Poor Chris!' said Barbara, and quite regardless of her uncle she put her arms round her lover's neck and kissed him like the tender-hearted, unsophisticated child she was. 'Am I cruel Barbara now?' she asked, nestling to him, and looking up with a smile half audacious, half appealing.

'No,' said Christopher a little sheepishly. But as she slipped away from him he recovered himself and took her in his arms and kissed her tenderly.

And so, shortly thereafter—to finish in the style of the best of all story-tellers who entertained us in our childhood—they married, and lived happily.

D. CHRISTIE MURRAY.

In China Town.

A PILGRIMAGE by night, under police escort, through the back slums and the opium-dens of the Chinese quarter in San Francisco did not appear to us a tempting prospect. It conveyed unpleasantly vivid ideas of various offences to eye, ear, and nose. Darkness and dirt and evil odours did not seem the elements of an enjoyable evening. But we had always understood that it was the duty of every tourist in San Francisco, of whatever age, sex, or condition, to undertake this little excursion, and we determined valiantly that the good old motto of 'Fais-ce que dois!' should be ours, and in our duty as Englishwomen and tourists we would not fail.

An American gentleman, one of the leading residents of the city, made arrangements for the expedition, and kindly volunteered to share with the police officer, whose company he had secured, the onerous duty of protecting us against the possible dangers of the Dens. It was a fine starlight night; such a beautiful, bracing, balmy winter night as only California knows. Kearney Street was bright and crowded, its gay shops all a-blaze with lights. But within a stone's-throw of that fashionable thoroughfare lie dingy Dupont and Jackson Streets, the main arteries of China Town, and thither led our road.

The first place we visited was a restaurant—the best Chinese restaurant in the city, our escorts informed us. The hour was too early for its habitués to sup, so we walked through 'banquet-halls deserted,' and saw an array of empty benches and tables blank as unwritten pages. It was very much like any other first-class restaurant, except for the hieroglyphical Chinese inscriptions on the walls, and the alcoves with cushionless couches for the retirement of opium-smokers. We saw trays full of cakes very like soap; and pats of bright yellow butter, pleasing to the eye; but their rancid odour decided us not to partake of refreshment there.

Our next move was a descent by means of a ladder-like staircase into a cellar where our London breeding led us to expect coals or beer-barrels. Instead of these, lo, a barber's shop! a sleek Chinaman seated like a statue under the barber's hands, two or three other Celestials, newly shaven and shorn, standing around. We passed through this subterranean tonsorial saloon to a subterranean pawnbroker's, very close and stuffy, and dimly lit by one

feeble flaring lamp. The pawnbroker smilingly recognised the police officer who led our little company, and invited us behind the counter. The customers, Chinamen all, smiled upon us blandly, as 'is their nature to.' If you look at a Chinaman, his face beams with the 'simple and childlike' smile immortalised by Bret Harte. Sometimes we wonder what lies behind that smile; sometimes we are suspicious as to the meaning of the words spoken in our presence, amongst themselves, in that to us most incomprehensible tongue. We remember that a favourite epithet of theirs for us is 'white devils'—we recall what we have lately often heard about their hatred especially of white women—grounded on an old prophecy handed down from traditional times, that a white woman should be the cause of the downfall of the Chinese Empire. We had grown well accustomed to 'John' with his pigtail and blouse, his skull-cap and slippers, his feline step and smooth-shorn face, long before we set out upon our evening peregrinations through the Chinese Quarter; but although the presence of our Mongolian brothers was nothing new now to us, the insight into their mode of life which we were to have this night had all the bloom of novelty upon it.

The pawnbroker's shop was crammed with every possible object on which a dollar could be raised; there were old clothes by the heap, a goodly array of clocks, and an armoury of deadly weapons, pistols, knives of all kinds, from the pocket-penknife up to a pair of murderous-looking blades, with which, our police guide informed us,—exemplifying meanwhile the method of wielding them, one in each hand,—he had known a man to be literally sliced to pieces. We inspected also a handy pocket weapon not unlike a short stout poker bent into a convenient curve for braining an antagonist.

'Almost every one of those fellows has one of these under his blouse,' our escort observed, indicating the group of shaven olive faces which were regarding us with stolid curiosity.

We passed on through this subterranean pawnbroker's into an apartment behind it, unlit, unventilated, very like the steerage cabin of an emigrant steamer, equally evil-odorous; and, if not quite equally crowded, still with more human beings inhaling its heavy, opium-laden atmosphere than the limited amount of room warranted. A double row of wooden shelves, some screened by ragged curtains, ran along each wall; the passage between these comfortless berths was only wide enough to permit us to pass one at a time; and in each berth lay a Chinaman, coiled up or stretched out—like wild animals in their lair, it seemed to us—each with his little lamp and pipe and pot of opium. (We watched

them take a pinch of the dark jelly-like substance on a wire and melt it over the lamp, then smear it over the aperture in the pipe, and draw it with great deep breaths into the lungs, their long eyes dilating and fixing like a crouching cat's the while.

Everywhere our escort seemed to be known, but the opium-smokers were too much absorbed in their occupation to take any great notice of us. We returned through the adjoining cellars, and climbed up gladly into the lighted street and breathed fresh air again.

We were next led down a long narrow black alley, so black that we had to grope our way, so narrow that we could only walk in single file, so long that by the time we reached the end of it we felt as if we had left the bright busy city of San Francisco a world away. The ground was slimy beneath our feet; the strip of sky was so far above our heads, that we seemed out of sight of the stars. We groped at last to a door whose worm-eaten planks seemed crumbling to decay. A Chinaman with a little oil lamp admitted us—not too willingly, it appeared to me.

We went through room after room, back, back, burrowing back along narrow passages, under low rafters, over slippery and rotting floors. We saw no door, no window, no aperture through which the blessed pure air might find its way. The air that entered with us by the door we had left so far behind seemed to be the first fresh breath that had entered there for hours. Everywhere, dirt and rags and squalor. Everywhere the wretched cupboards or shelves wherein the opium-smokers lay, often two on a shelf; everywhere the strange sickly Oriental opium smell kindly overpowering worse odours; everywhere the strange secretive eyes leering at us cat-like as we looked into their lurking-place.

It was Tophet! we felt we had been carried down into some lower world. The memory of those scenes comes back like an evil dream. The various opium-dens whose dark and repulsive recesses we penetrated bore a strong family resemblance to each other, the only difference perceptible to us being that we entered some by subterranean, and some by level ways. There appeared, however, to be grades of reputation among them which we should not have distinguished. Our escort took a pride in pioneering us through the worst places.

'*This*,' he said confidentially, with an air of relish, 'is a regular den of thieves!'—looking round an underground gallery whose aspect and odour suggested the contents of a London dust-hole or a New York ash-barrel, but for the kindly overwhelming scent of opium—and *that*,' he observed, when we had emerged into the fresh pure starlit night, indicating a narrow crowded street, 'is

Murderer's Alley! and it's rightly named! That's the haunt of all the most dangerous and desperate characters. From that place we've carried out twenty-three murdered men within the last year or two; and all shot or stabbed *in the back!*'

During our walk down Murderer's Alley we kept closely to our escort, and felt more comfortable when the light shone on his gilt buttons than in those shadowy corners where it occurred to us as unpleasantly probable that the majesty of the law—under whose ægis we walked confiding—might happen not to be recognised.

We agreed that to create a truly flattering stir and sensation amongst our fellow-creatures, if we count the Mongolian as a man and a brother, we should come to China Town. Nowhere else in the civilised world would our presence have caused so much curiosity and interest—*excitement* is totally incompatible with the Celestial calm. Outside every house as we came out, we would find a crowd of blouses and pigtails waiting to get a look at us, not staring nor shoving nor pushing, but surveying us with a serene and critical gaze.

Our duty in China Town would have been only half done if we had not visited the women's quarters, and such an omission our courteous and attentive escort would by no means have allowed. With the exception of half-a-dozen ladies of high caste, wives of the principal merchants, there are few or none except the most degraded class of women in all the Chinese Quarter. These poor creatures are in reality slaves, bought and sold and sent over the sea in slavery, and apparently sunk too low for shame—yet no, not *sunk*; they never sank, they were always down. They sat behind little grated windows, each face pressed curiously against the lattice as we passed. They were all inoffensive, smiling and civil; we saw not one antagonistic look, heard not an unpleasant tone from any of them.

We went into one house where they welcomed us most cordially, smiling and crowding round us, and offering willing hands to help us down the uneven steps. Some of them had their hair elaborately dressed, and were really good-looking young women; others were to our eyes repellently plain. One pretty little girl in a dark-blue blouse, with the loveliest pale olive complexion, and a certain innocence of look that was strange indeed to meet with then and there, especially attracted us. 'How old is she? and how long have you had her?' we asked of the woman who appeared to be the head of the establishment. 'He fifteen; him mother sell him two years ago,' was the answer; the gender of the pronoun being apparently the last thing in the language the Chinese learn.

In another house of the same class we found some really very nice neatly furnished little rooms; the place was crowded as a rabbit burrow; from every doorway calmly curious faces peered out to inspect us, and into every room we were hospitably invited to enter. They all laughed and chatted amicably. Two young girls, by order of their chief, were exemplifying the use of the chopsticks in a bowl of rice for our entertainment—when a low shrill whistle cut through the buzz of laughter and chat, and in an instant a crowd of Chinese, babbling and gabbling, came rushing from all corners. Our escort turned promptly to the staircase. ‘That’s a fire-alarm,’ he said quietly. ‘Come!’ We needed no second bidding. Down two flights of narrow stairs, and through a labyrinth of low-ceiled passages, we made the quickest time I ever remember. It turned out to be a false or distant alarm; but in the brief minute since the signal whistle, half-a-dozen policemen seemed to have sprung out of the ground, and the street was crowded.

We visited two or three joss-houses. They were all much alike, dingy carpetless apartments up one or more flights of stairs; with tables covered with handsome vases, candlesticks, and other offerings; panels of rare and curious carving in bas-relief, protected by a grating; tinsel, trays of joss-sticks, incense, a huge gong in one corner, which, when we ventured lightly to touch it, gave forth a deep sepulchral toll; and on the altar, ‘Joss’ in state—a life-sized idol, gorgeously clad, and more or less ugly. In one room was the shrine of a goddess. She was a good woman, ‘heap good woman,’ who had been dead three thousand years, and at whose altar women come to pray. We were gratified, and surprised, to find that a woman had been deemed worthy of canonisation, and that women were presumably admitted to have souls for which to pray. Perhaps, however, they are supposed only to pray for the souls of their lords.

We had the pleasure of a glimpse into the homes of the higher class of Chinese, the well-to-do merchants, at the celebration of the Chinese New Year, which this year fell on February 9. We set forth to pay a round of New Year visits with two ladies who were well acquainted with one of the merchants, Sam Lee.

Arrived at Sam Lee’s residence on the Plaza at the foot of Clay Street, our friends sent a China-boy to announce our advent. He disappeared through an open doorway into the dark and mysterious regions below the pavement, whence soon a stout and smiling Chinaman emerged bit by bit, first skull cap and pigtail, then blue blouse, large loose shuffling slippers, till all of him stood on the topmost step, bowing and gracious and full of smiling welcome.

This was Sam Lee. He shook hands with us warmly upon introduction, and invited us down the steep stairs into a large cellar, apparently used as a workshop, only lit of course by the entrance; and consequently sufficiently dark for the various objects in the background to look uncanny and mysterious.

He led us through this into a second cellar, smaller and darker, where several Chinese were sitting and standing about. Our host invited us to be seated, and, blinking through the obscurity, we distinguished chairs and a small table laden with trays, glasses, and decanters. An attendant brought us wine, and a large silver salver, containing various kinds of candied fruit, dried melon-seeds, and a delicious white sweetmeat very like Rahat Lakoum or Turkish Delight. The wine, our host informed us, was 'Melican wine,' adding—'China wine too strong.' We should not have been true daughters of Eve if this description had not aroused our curiosity to taste the China wine. We immediately had a tiny glass filled therewith, to which we all just put our lips in turn. We pronounced it good, but a very little of it went a long way. It was like strong liqueur, with an orange-peel flavour. We asked what it was made of, and were answered 'rice'—our host, as usual, giving 'r' the sound of 'l.'

We passed on into a third cellar, smaller still, where a gentleman reclined on the usual wooden couch, with the usual lamp and pipe, smoking; then into a fourth, which, to complete the diminishing scale, was smallest of all. This was Sam Lee's sleeping apartment. It boasted, for a wonder, of a tiny pane of glass, letting in a feeble ray of light, and actually of a flower, a Chinese lily in a vase. There was rather a handsome bed, a little table, and next to no furniture besides; indeed, there was not room for any. Our friends explained that Sam Lee was only keeping house in bachelor style now.

'He lived in fine style when he had his wives here with him,' they said. He has two wives, who are now in China. He has also a history. Some three years ago a reward was offered in China Town for his life, he having given some offence to some unknown person in authority. Such things are not uncommon. We saw one day in a Joss-house an inscription, which, being translated to us, was a promise of the favour of the great Joss to any person or persons who should remove from this life two given individuals who had the misfortune of being obnoxious to Joss. Sam Lee was in the way, and a reward was offered for his being put out of the way. He very sensibly did not wait to be violently removed, but took himself out of the way, and returned to China with his wives.

He came back to San Francisco in time, having, we may presume, received some intimation that he was no longer an obstacle to be got rid of.

Accompanied by Sam Lee, we went to pay a visit to his partner's wife. The streets of China Town were gay with coloured lanterns, and swarming with Celestials in holiday attire. The ubiquitous Eastern tourist, whom we had met prowling about the Joss-houses by night, was here in full force—the male tourist, at least; we saw no ladies in China Town that day but ourselves. They gazed after us with our Chinese escort, especially when we turned up a flight of sawdust-covered stairs, whither one enterprising tourist—whether he was from New York or London I know not—looked strongly inclined to follow us.

Sam Lee led us into a large, airy, well-furnished room—the first such apartment we had seen in China Town—where a little Chinese lady, gorgeously attired, came forward and shook hands with us. She played hostess prettily, offered us chairs, and bade her waiting-maid bring us sweetmeats and wine. She could speak a few words of English, but to our attempts at conversation she only replied by a perpetual ripple of laughter, looking shyly aside, too bashful to talk, but evidently thinking the position an extremely humorous one.

Her hair was wonderful to look upon, brushed off the temples and standing out in large stiff loops like glossy wire. On her head she wore a profusion of gilt leaves and artificial flowers. Her dress, a kind of blouse over a clinging skirt, was of rich blue silk exquisitely embroidered in green and gold. As she became more at home with us, perceiving our interest in her toilette, she showed us that the dress she wore was the outer of five or six similar garments, all of fine silk; she let us look at her wide loose sleeves, sleeve inside sleeve, the under-sleeve of all of white silk edged with pink. She then sent her little maid to fetch some of her other dresses to show us—silks heavy with rare gold embroidery, over which we sighed with envy.

Sam Lee was much pleased at our admiration. He was smoking an elaborate work of art in the shape of a pipe, and on my complimenting him on its beauty he straightway handed it to me, saying, 'You smokee him!' I perceived by his smiling and gracious air that this was a compliment which I was expected to appreciate and accept, and rising to the occasion I took the pipe and doubtfully drew a few experimental breaths. I hoped that it was going to be handed round, and pleased myself picturing the countenances of the other ladies when it came to be their turn to

puff at the pipe of peace ; but, alas ! I was the only one selected for this honour.

Before we left, the little Chinese lady kindly consented to show us her tiny feet. If the height of the caste is in inverse ratio to the size of the feet, she must be a lady of very high dignity ; for her foot was about as long as my middle finger. The feet are not merely dwarfed, but doubled down at the joint and crushed into a misshapen thing like a hoof, so that the so-called 'shoe' they wear is more a bag than a slipper, with a strip of silk wound round and round up to the ankle. The foot is not, as we had previously supposed, cramped in an iron shoe from infancy, but bandaged when the poor little victim is seven or eight years old : the suffering of course is great.

We went next, under Sam Lee's escort, to another apartment on the same floor, to visit a friend of his, a merchant, whose name I forget, but Sing Yang will do as well as any other, and comes quite near enough to the sound. Sing Yang, then, was a very fine specimen of a courteous and dignified gentleman, of a grave and intellectual cast of countenance ; he spoke English almost perfectly, and his manner as host might have done credit to any nation. He was clad in a rich blue silk. Sam Lee wore only cotton, being in mourning for his mother, in which case silk is prohibited. In Sing Yang's handsome apartment many guests were assembled, Chinese, of course ; some were smoking, all appeared beaming with good nature. As each fresh guest entered, radiant with smiles, and voluble with New Year's greetings, he salaamed, and the host salaamed, and everybody who knew the new arrival salaamed, till a general knocking together of heads seemed imminent, the salute consisting of a clapping together of the hands and bowing forward nearly to the ground. There were two tables loaded with cakes and sweets, and I had a narrow escape of committing a sacrilegious deed. I saw on one table a plate of tempting-looking sweetmeats ; and, as others were being handed about and tasted all around the circle, I was about to take one of these candies, when luckily I perceived in time a candle and a joss-stick burning on the table, and realised that these sacred dainties were offerings to the gods.

We mentioned to Sing-Yang that we had just had the pleasure of seeing a lady of his nation with tiny feet. 'Ah,' he responded proudly, '*I* got one like that ! I shall order her come in.' He then proceeded to tell us that he had only lately been married ; his wife had never beheld a man until she married him, and had never seen a man except himself since. This day, being the New Year, she was to make her first appearance in public,

and bring us tea. We waited with interest for the entrance of the bride.

The next time the door opened, however, it was to admit a smiling and salaaming visitor, who led a little white child about three years old. It was dressed as English and American children are, and lisped its pretty imperfect English when we petted it and asked its name. This little Bessie, notwithstanding her English name and English aspect, turned out to be the child of the Chinese who led her by the hand, and who proudly owned the relationship. 'Me married Englee lady,' he said; and Sing-Yang added confidentially to us that his friend had married an English teacher in a school. Such a union is, however, of very, very rare occurrence.

The next arrival who, in answer to Sing-Yang's hospitable 'come in' (or the Chinese equivalent to come in!), flung open the door, caused a sensation in the company—that is, as much sensation as can easily be caused among the calm Chinese. He was a 'hoodlum'—that indescribable and especial product of San Francisco, who must be seen to be realised. There he stood, rakish hat, wry necktie, hoodlum from top to toe, while behind him pressed a group of brother hoodlums, all evidently out for a lark. 'Come to pay a New Year call!' he said jauntily. Then his eye fell on *us*, installed in our rocking-chairs, and he hastily took off his hat, from the crown of which fell some cigars. Sing-Yang, to whom the intruders were of course strangers, advanced to them with dignified chill courtesy. 'You will excuse me—I have ladies here!' he said, waving his hand towards us. Exeunt hoodlums discomfited, even forgetting to pick up the cigars; but effecting their retreat in good order. Then Sing Yang bolted the door.

Presently from an inner room the bride at last made her appearance. She was supported by two waiting-maids; she carried a fan in one hand, and a tray of little cups of tea in the other. Like her neighbour in the opposite room, she was resplendent in silk and gold embroidery, her cheeks painted with vermilion, and her hair arranged in huge stiff glossy bows. But she was so painfully shy that we could not look in her face, and it would have been positive cruelty to speak to her. She leant on her maids, and bent her head till her face almost touched the tray she carried, and tried to hide her features entirely behind her fan. Etiquette demanded that she should walk round the circle and offer a cup of tea to every guest, and our hearts were moved to compassion for the poor little bride as she fulfilled her duty, trembling in every limb and hiding her face, her maids guiding her shaking hand as

she offered each guest the tea. It was the first time she had seen a man except her husband; and it certainly could not be said that, with her downcast eyes and hidden face, she *saw* man now.

The tea was served without milk or sugar, with a small plum or raisin in each cup, and was pronounced by such as were epicures in tea—which I am not!—to be delicious.

On our way home from China Town, we passed a group of rough-looking men in soiled and shabby garments, most of them swarthy, bearded, and unkempt, standing on the street-corner, apparently having an open-air debate in under-tones.

‘Kearneyites,’ whispered one of our party. ‘Sand-lotters,’ observed another.

They stared at us as we drew near, with rather suspicious than approving glances. We wondered why our party attracted their attention, until we remembered that we all carried in our hands conspicuous red Chinese New Year cards; and that the Kearney cry is, ‘The Chinese must go!’ The Sand-lotters looked at us, and I looked at the Sand-lotters, and speculated inwardly—In whose power would I rather be? in whose power rather see the city that I love?—in that of these men, the Communists of California, the fire-brands of that fair state, the Mob incarnate, yet withal of our own blood and our own race—or in that of the smooth, sleek-spoken Chinese, inoffensive, industrious, frugal, patient worker by day, smoking opium in his dark and dirty dens of vice by night—his secret silent life beyond the reach of our laws, beyond the influence of our civilisation! It is well that Law and Order in this city of San Francisco are strong—stronger than either or all of the parties that are struggling for supremacy. For there are turbulent and violent elements here; and the conflict is not over yet.

IZA DUFFUS HARDY.

The Leadon Casket.

BY MRS. ALFRED W. HUNT.

CHAPTER XLIII.

‘Das Muss ist hart.’—*Iphigenia*.

MR. ARDROSSAN had reached the mature age of forty-five, and had never until now been seriously in love. His life had been one of activity in many directions. His father was a merchant, who had rather surprised the world by the enormous fortune which he left behind him—a fortune built up as silently and imperceptibly as a coral reef, by sheer strength of organising power, constantly exercised, and self-multiplied through agencies scattered all over the world. Large as the fortune was (and Lancashire, it is well known, is not readily surprised in matters of that kind nowadays,) it was allowed on all sides that it must have been well and honestly made. Robert Ardrossan’s name was a synonym for unblemished uprightness on any Exchange where it was mentioned. It was rumoured that the rule of *caveat emptor* was not in his office held as one to be rigidly observed against a fellow-trader; in fact, that he preferred the golden rule, and did his best to carry it out in all his dealings. Of his three sons he had settled that the eldest should succeed to his own place in the business, and perhaps in due time to the seat in Parliament which he himself had gained too late in life to admit of his making any figure there; his second should be what he wished to be—a soldier; and the third should also follow the bent of his wishes, which pointed to a life of scholarly calm and philanthropic effort. Almost from the first, however, it was evident that this third son had inherited the largest share of his father’s ability. He was the most quiet and assiduous of students; well liked at school and college, but with a strong turn for visiting the poor, and with slightly quixotic views about the duties attached to wealth. Later on he might possibly have buried himself in a Scotch manse with the little world of a few Highland glens for his benevolent activity to work upon, and the endless world of philosophical inquiry tempting him to ever active intellectual exercise, had not the duties connected with the great town which was the centre of his father’s business, and the terrible needs which he saw there, absorbed his whole

energy. Then came a great change. His eldest brother was lost by a slip on an Alpine glacier; his soldier brother was carried off by a fever in India; and his father died within a year of these misfortunes. John Ardrossan was called to rule in his stead. He did his new work well, but he never gave up that which was dear to him before wealth and position were thrust on him. As soon as he could, he resigned his place in the firm in favour of a cousin on the mother's side, and then toiled at his various social reforms with the enthusiasm of a Romney Leigh, but with the keen shrewdness of a thorough man of the world. Year after year he spent with heart and brain absorbed in these things to the exclusion of all else, and so it might have continued to the end if he had not met Olive Brooke. He admired her as he had never admired any woman before. She was beautiful with the beauty he most valued, intelligent, docile, and in every way charming to him, and he felt that if he could prevail on her to be his wife he had nothing left to wish for. He could not well measure her feeling for himself. She was unmistakably fond of him, but he sometimes—nay, often—feared that the affection she gave him was only that of a child for a father. He had, however, watched her narrowly, and had ascertained that there was no one whom she liked better, unless, perhaps, it was Morrison. He was quite aware that Morrison loved her, but believed she had refused him. He had seen nothing of Morrison for some time—principally because he had taken no steps to do so, all his time having been divided between Bethnal Green and Olive. He did not know that Morrison was now engaged to another woman. Olive too was ignorant of this, and was likely to remain so until Miss Lettice either returned to London or could screw herself up to the task of writing a letter especially addressed to Olive herself, for no one else was likely to care for such a fragment of information. Since Mrs. Brooke's renunciation of novel-writing, to which she adhered religiously, Mr. Ardrossan had lost many little opportunities which he had hitherto enjoyed of seeing Olive alone. He had, however, used his time in trying to read her thoughts, and was on the whole hopeful. On a fine afternoon at the very end of April he ran briskly up certain stone stairs in Pall Mall, for he expected to see Olive very soon after he had got to the top of them. It was the private view of the Old Water-Colour Society, and he knew that she was to be there. She was standing by one of the screens nearest to the door, and was wholly absorbed in the contemplation of a drawing. Eager buyers brushed past her, knots of connoisseurs pressed close, from whose lips fell trippingly cant phrases of praise or blame; reviewers, note-book in hand, commented on mysteries of execution.

She heard nothing, saw nothing but that bit of cunningly stained paper; and when he saw her eager interest, Mr. Ardrossan, the envy of half the young men in London, would willingly have resigned all the great possessions which they coveted, to change places with Morrison, whom they would have despised, but who had that subtle something men call genius, who had golden youth and hope, and, more than all, the power of making Olive's eyes glow thus with admiration.

She had changed her style of dress. Hitherto Mr. Ardrossan had always seen her in the dainty but elaborate confections of Madame Filoselle; but all Madame Filoselle's confections had been sent back to her, and to-day Olive wore a picturesque last-century dress, and he had never seen her look so well. It was part of her wardrobe before Lady Brooke came back from India, and its colour was a strange dull red. Mrs. Brooke said that it was something like strawberries-and-cream—Mrs. Ullathorne, more prosaically, compared it to brickdust well mixed with lime. We leave the discriminating reader to judge between the two ladies. She wore a soft hat of the same material and a tiny frilled cape; and just as she was leaving the house her aunt Selina had completed her costume by thrusting a 'posy' of Lent lilies into her hand. Mr. Ardrossan approached her, but still her mind was occupied with the drawing on the screen before her. 'Look at it,' said she; 'it is Mr. Morrison's. Don't you think it wonderfully good?'

'I think it splendid,' he answered warmly.

'Every one seems to think so. I hear people saying such delightful things about it. What would I not give to paint like that! Mr. Ardrossan, how is it that one man can paint a picture like that, while others do such miserably poor dull things?'

He smiled, for he knew she could answer this question she was putting, quite as well as he could; but he said, 'Besides brushes and colours, and skill to use them, you must have what Morrison has: intense love of the thing he is trying to represent, and the mind of a poet.'

'And he used to be so unpoetical!—at least, I used to think so, —you know, we knew each other when we were both children.'

'Yes, he has told me so. Have you seen him lately?'

'Oh no, I never see him. He never comes to my aunt's. She invites him, but he always refuses.'

Mr. Ardrossan did not understand these two. If Olive had refused Morrison, as he half-thought she had when last he saw them together, how could she expect him to come to the house where she was? And what did this regret imply? He ventured on another remark, hoping that she would say something in answer to

it which would help him to see his way a little better. 'I met him in Harley Street one Tuesday evening. I am sure you remember his being there, don't you?—you had some talk then.'

'Yes,' replied Olive, blushing slightly. 'We talked of old times, when we knew each other, but I am afraid I was not so nice to him as I should have been if my head had not been so full of other things. It was the time you were helping me to find Mary Gardiner. I could think of no one then but my poor mother.'

'Ah, I know, I see, I understand,' said he, and he feared he did understand. He was silent, and during that silence was nerving himself for the terrible effort which it would cost him to do something which he began to see would have to be done. 'Is Morrison here?' he at length asked.

'Yes, my aunt said she saw him—with Dr. Ullathorne and a young lady, I think she said.'

'I have such good news for him! I met one of the Ellesmere Gallery people last night, and made a point of asking about our friend's pictures. They are splendidly hung and immensely admired. They are both centres in the large room.'

'You are going to tell him?' said Olive, looking much delighted.

'Yes. Would you like to be the bearer of the good news?'

'Yes—no; but I should like to see how he looks when you tell him.'

'No, you shall tell him, and I will be the one to watch his looks,' said he, and he mentally added, 'And yours too: after which, I think I shall know my fate.' He shrank from the pain of hearing her refuse him—he wished to keep her as a friend. He had lived forty-and-five years without her love; and, if it needs must be, had strength to go on to the end alone. He set his fate on the result of the brief interview which he was now arranging to witness from afar. It must not be supposed that these two had enjoyed an unmolested *tête-à-tête*. They had been interrupted a dozen times, but had resisted all efforts to drag them away to distant pictures by pointing to the dense crowd and crying for mercy. Mr. Ardrossan looked round for a seat for Olive, and just as he had found one, Morrison, Miss Keithley, and Dr. Ullathorne came towards the screen where they had been standing so long. Rose Keithley was insisting on seeing all Morrison's drawings. Olive did not see who was coming; she had just turned away to sit down, but before she could do so was stopped by Mrs. Brooke. Mrs. Brooke never minded disturbing lovers. What would become of novels and novel-writers if that were not done constantly? 'Oh, here you are, Olive!' cried she. 'I have been

having such a pleasant chat with the editor of the "Quixotic Magazine"! I would have come to you, though, only I saw you were with Mr. Ardrossan; but I'll stay with you now. Oh no, by the way, I can't, but I'll come back in a minute. There is a man just coming into the room whom I must speak to—if I don't catch him now, he will be swallowed up in the crowd, and I shall have no chance.' And she hurried away, for she had caught sight of a celebrated critic, who had, in a review of 'Cross-and-Fifty,' just complained that the character of the cross lady was altogether unnatural.

'It is rather hard,' she said to him, 'that, after losing a legacy of seventy thousand pounds for making that character so very like nature, I should be told by you that it is not like at all!'

"What so false as truth is!" cried he gaily. 'Browning tells you that, and this gallery will tell you that a piece of literal transcript is a perfect blot in a work which claims to be imaginative at all.'

But Mrs. Brooke felt she must argue that point, and began to do so.

In the meantime Dr. Ullathorne had espied Mr. Ardrossan, who had seated himself and was keeping a place for Olive; but Olive was waylaid by admiring friends, and Morrison had seen her, and was waiting until she was released by them. Dr. Ullathorne was tired of pictures and of standing in a warm and crowded room. He dropped down into the seat which was being kept for Olive by Mr. Ardrossan's side, and soon afterwards made his unwilling niece squeeze herself in also, introducing her as a 'born artist' herself.

'I envy you the possession of so delightful a faculty,' said Mr. Ardrossan, looking into her pretty frank face with some admiration.

'Oh, there's Halstead!' cried Dr. Ullathorne. 'I must go and speak to him. I want to hear about a Select Committee he is on. Rose, will you stay here till I come back? Don't let me lose you.'

'I will watch over Miss Keithley's safety,' said Mr. Ardrossan, hoping, however, that she would not prevent his watching something else in which he took far more interest. 'Do you think this a good Exhibition?' he asked.

'Yes, very, but I like seeing the people as well as the pictures,' said she. 'Don't be shocked. The dresses are so odd, and so picturesque! What a pretty girl that is! But what a dress! Still, I cannot help rather liking it.' She was looking at Olive, who, finding herself alone, and very near Morrison, was at first too shy to approach him even with her good news. She returned to his

picture, thus showing some ignorance of artistic nature, for if she wanted him to join her she might have known that one of his own pictures would only help to keep him away.

'That is Miss Brooke,' said Mr. Ardrossan. 'People think her very beautiful.'

'That Miss Brooke!' cried Miss Keithley, and for a moment she was too much overcome by the sight to say more. Mr. Ardrossan never even observed her comparative silence; he was looking at Morrison, who was standing close behind Olive, hesitating in what way to present himself. But now a fussy little man, with a note-book in his hand and wild anxiety in his eyes, interposed between Morrison and Olive and the two who were watching them. 'That's a belated critic,' said Mr. Ardrossan, 'a new hand on a new paper, I should say. Listen to him telling everybody that the day is not all pleasure to him, for he has to write about it. A new hand, evidently.'

Rose Keithley made some answer which was just sufficient to prove that she had heard what he said, but nothing more. He noticed its insufficiency, and was glad she did not want to be talked to. He little knew that she was as deeply interested in what was now passing before her eyes as he was. Again the crowd parted, and Morrison and Olive stood revealed to the two on the ottoman. Had these two been near enough to hear what was being said, this is what they would have heard: 'Mr. Morrison'—Olive was, of course, the speaker—'is it rude to tell an artist to his face what pleasure his pictures give you? I hope it is not, for I want so to say it to you!'

He coloured with delight, and said, 'They can hardly give you as much pleasure as these words of yours are giving me.'

'Mr. Ardrossan has entrusted a message to me,' she continued, with downcast eyes, for she was beginning to think that she had been somewhat over-bold in taking this office on herself.

'Oh, I saw him in the room a quarter of an hour ago. I don't know where he is now. May I hear the message?'

'It is this. He was dining somewhere last night where he saw one of the Ellesmere Gallery authorities—some one who knows all about where the pictures are hung, I mean—and he made him say where yours are placed. They are hung beautifully; both of them are "centres," and they are immensely admired by every one.'

He was gazing at her with eyes full of loving admiration, and if she had raised hers she must have seen it. Two who were witnessing this scene from afar saw more of it than she did.

Olive never looked up; she dared not, for she had something else to say. 'Mr. Ardrossan allowed me to be the one to tell you this,

because he knew it would give me pleasure, and it does give me great pleasure.'

He did not speak so quickly as she expected him to do; he was thinking how strange it was that she should be the one to tell him this, how strange that he could not enjoy his good fortune as he ought. The bitter overcame the sweet.

'You don't seem half happy enough about it,' cried she. 'I am astonished at your taking it so calmly. Two pictures in such splendid places! Why, it is quite an achievement!'

Scarcely had this last word crossed her lips than she could have bitten her tongue off for using it. A speech of her own long ago flashed into her mind. She remembered how she had assured him of her constancy, how she had entreated him to put it to the test hereafter, when they were older, when he would find her always ready to remember that she had promised to marry him—only before he claimed her he must have some "achievements." What malignant demon of mischief had thrust that word on to her lips now? She blushed; she said two or three stammering words; she looked up; she saw that he remembered the word and the occasion on which she had last used it quite as well as she herself did, and that he was struck by the use she had made of it now. Their eyes met, and for one brief moment they seemed to see far down into the depths of each other's hearts. What Olive saw made her turn crimson. 'I said that word by mistake,' cried she in an agony of nervousness, thus unconsciously throwing away all defence. Then she tried to recover herself, and with an affectation of gaiety cried, 'Now, own that you are pleased. Is it not good news?'

'Yes, it is good news; but how I wish it had but come sooner!'

'Mr. Morrison,' cried Mrs. Brooke, who, having done with her critic, had now time to look after Olive, and joined her and Morrison at this trying moment, 'I congratulate you on your pictures here and elsewhere. Their praises are on every tongue. I congratulate you, too, on something else. I have just seen Dr. Ullathorne, and he has told me that you are engaged to be married. Did you know that Mr. Morrison was going to be married, Olive?'

'No,' said Olive, 'I did not, but I am very pleased to hear of it. I wish you every happiness.' And she held out her hand to Morrison, whose confusion was so great that he hardly saw it.

'You will bring Miss Keithley to see me, won't you?' continued Mrs. Brooke. 'I know her relations the Ullathornes, of course, and I shall be delighted to make her acquaintance. Come, Olive; I have not seen any of the drawings at the other end of the room. Don't let us go home having seen nothing. Good-

bye for the present, Mr. Morrison. I dare say we shall come across each other again before the afternoon is over.'

While this scene was taking place between Olive and Mr. Morrison, Rose Keithley and Mr. Ardrossan were still sitting watching them. But even Mr. Ardrossan, who was so engrossed by what he saw, could not fail to observe that his silent little companion had grown alarmingly pale. 'They ought to open their windows wider at these places,' said he. 'I am sure you are suffering from the heat.'

'Yes, the heat—it is hot,' said she drearily—'very hot.'

Then came the crisis—then looks passed between the two which could only be interpreted in one way. Morrison and Miss Brooke were lovers who had somehow been estranged, but in their hearts were lovers still. Mr. Ardrossan cared to see no more; he pressed his lips together, turned to Miss Keithley, and wished that her uncle would come and look after her and let him get home. But her face was whiter than ever; and just as he was going to offer to take her into the air, Dr. Ullathorne came back, too full of some conversation in which he had just been taking a part which pleased him, to notice mere changes of expression or complexion.

'Miss Keithley is feeling the heat,' said Mr. Ardrossan. 'I think she ought not to stay any longer in this crowded room.'

'Oh, bless my soul, Rose, what a white face you have! Let us get away at once. I don't see your friend Morrison. I suppose he will think it very unkind of you to go without him. I'll look for him, but it is no easy matter to find any one in a place like this.'

Miss Keithley could have pointed him out quite easily. She did not. She moved a little farther along the seat, so as to lose sight of the two whom she had been watching with such pain. She tried to make her uncle come out of sight also. 'Sit here with me, dear,' said she to him. 'Let us wait a little longer. I have a very particular reason for wishing William not to be disturbed for a while.'

When she said this Mr. Ardrossan could have worshipped her. Dr. Ullathorne's words had informed him of the engagement, but Miss Keithley's own words told him far more. She had seen all—knew all—knew that she had only a second place in the heart of the man to whom she had plighted her troth—that, somehow or other, he had been held apart from Olive Brooke, the woman whom he best loved. She was aware of all this, and yet her instinctive impulse was to sacrifice her own happiness to his.

Mr. Ardrossan saw this, and recognised her as a noble, high-

mindful woman. He saw that she was made of the fine stuff which can sacrifice itself unhesitatingly to secure the happiness of the beloved object.

'Ah, you don't want him disturbed, you mercenary little thing,' said Dr. Ullathorne benignly. 'You think he is selling pictures and getting good commissions. Well, you are right—the mill must have grist.'

Rose Keithley heard this, and even smiled a sickly smile. In watching her Mr. Ardrossan forgot his own sorrows, but he wished he could have stopped that speech being made. He did his best to prevent any further aggravation of her sufferings by engaging the worthy divine in conversation. They talked, and Rose Keithley sat patiently waiting for what must come. After some little time Morrison joined them. He looked quietly sad, as if he had gone through some scene which had tried him terribly, but was firmly resolved to do what he thought right. He smiled gravely when he saw Mr. Ardrossan. 'Oh, you are here!' said he. 'I am so glad. And you have been introduced to Miss Keithley, I see—I had hoped to have the pleasure of introducing you myself.' Then he turned to her and said, 'Rose, dear, I am afraid you are very tired. I hope you have not been waiting for me.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

Good phrases are surely, and ever were, commendable.

Merry Wives of Windsor.

MADAME FILOSELLE, ill-content with her interview with Mrs. Raymond, and wishing for a prompt understanding with some member of the Brooke family more easy of access than Sir Chesterfield himself, went without delay to the moneyed one—Mrs. Ullathorne. In the interest of public morality it was well that she did so, for never, perhaps, in the whole course of the milliner's devious existence did she hear such an unqualified statement of any other person's opinion of her conduct as she did from Mrs. Ullathorne, who told her she was a scheming swindler, a cunning thief of the very meanest kind, an abominable creature who ought at once to be sent to gaol! She repudiated all obligation on her part to pay the debt—she emphatically declined to touch pitch in any shape. She said she only hoped Madame Filoselle would bring the matter before the public, as she was now threatening to do, for it would be the best means of drawing attention to such scandals. As to the disgrace to her family which would ensue, she professed not to care a pin for that. Her niece, Miss Brooke—the only one connected with the affair for whom she felt any real

regard—had been perfectly ignorant of what was being done, and had indignantly returned every fragment of apparel or ornament she had ever had from Madame Filoselle, directly she was informed of it. As for Mrs. Raymond and Lady Brooke, Mrs. Ullathorne knew what she thought about them, and the less said on that subject for the present, the better. Mrs. Ullathorne utterly disregarded all threats, would listen to no arguments; in fact, poured out such a torrent of violent abuse, that Madame Filoselle, who when she entered had felt herself strong enough to move mountains, had just energy enough left to creep out of the room and feebly make her way back to her carriage. When once her story was told she had not had even so much as a chance of raising her voice.

‘No wonder that woman is a widow,’ she gasped. ‘No man could hold out for a month who had such a creature as that in the house with him.’

Mrs. Ullathorne did not recover her usual equanimity for hours. She did not much wish to do so. She felt herself called on to act, and to let every one who had been connected with such a shameful transaction feel distinctly and permanently the worse for it. She took pen and paper, and then sat staring at the white page before her for some time, for no words which she could think of seemed strong enough to convey even a tithe of what she felt. She finally gave up the attempt to find any that would be adequate to her purpose. ‘I will just write quietly,’ said she to herself. ‘I dare say a simple letter will be the best. After all, it is the matter which is important, and not the manner.’

‘Esther Raymond,’ she began, ‘I always thought you a terrible fool, but I did not know that you were a knave as well. Your milliner, whom you employed in that disgraceful manner to dress out Olive to catch a rich husband, has been here at my house, to try to extort money from me. I have told her what I think of her, and that I hope and trust she will make the whole thing public, for it will only hurt those who richly deserve to be hurt. She knows what I think of her, so now let me tell you what I think of you. On second thoughts, that would require time, and I don’t feel very well, and it is of no use to make myself worse by writing to a person whom I despise as much as I despise you. Keep away from me; I shall never again be able to bring myself to be decently civil to you. Any one who could be a party to such a bargain as you entered into with that disreputable swindling milliner is not fit for my society, though you have always affected to look down on my friends. Don’t come to see me. Don’t expect to be the better for anything that I may happen to have to leave behind me when I die, for I certainly shall never let any of my money go to

any one of your stamp. My mind is fully made up, and I am glad you have furnished me with this opportunity of knowing your true character while I have time to use my knowledge.'

This done, Mrs. Ullathorne read her letter over—was pleased at the calmness and reticence she had displayed in it—sealed and lost no time in despatching it. Then she lay down on her sofa and made Bessie Cochrane fan her, for she said she had had a very unpleasant interview with a person who had spoken with so much temper that she had quite made her ill.

Early next morning Mrs. Raymond called. She was denied admittance. Immediately afterwards Mrs. Ullathorne ordered out the family coach and went to Harley Street to tell Dr. Brooke what had occurred. 'I have seen Madame Filoselle myself,' said he quietly; 'she came here yesterday. My dear Mary, I don't wonder at your being shocked.'

"Shocked" does not express it, and never will,' cried Mrs. Ullathorne, making a fan of her handkerchief and fanning herself in uneasy desperation.

'It hardly does,' said Dr. Brooke, who felt the disgrace most keenly. 'I am not surprised at Olive's stepmother—she is capable of anything; but that Esther should be guilty of such a thing!'

'And Esther will say that we are only shocked because we are not in society,' said Mrs. Ullathorne, to whom this assertion of her sister's had always been a dire insult, though she carefully concealed her feelings.

'There is one law of right and wrong for every kind of society,' replied Dr. Brooke. 'For my part, I should like to put people who do such things in gaol.'

'I do so wish we could!' cried Mrs. Ullathorne, grasping in imagination big prison-keys of which she was the keeper.

'Well, we shall hear no more of Madame Filoselle,' said Dr. Brooke; 'I have arranged to pay her.'

'You have? How foolish! how vexing! She does not deserve to have one penny.'

'I think it more consistent with the family honour that she should be paid. Olive wore the clothes.'

'Yes, but you may be quite certain that that creature charged twenty times as much as they were worth.'

'I said so. She is content to take half, and I have promised her a cheque in a month's time.'

'Richard, your means are not so good as mine—let me pay her.'

'Oh, it's settled now. Besides, I consider Olive my own child.' Mrs. Ullathorne was deeply touched by her brother's sacrifice,

and by his care for the family honour. With all her pretended indifference, she disliked the exposure immensely. She was silent for some minutes; then she said suddenly, 'Richard, I was vexed with Selina about that novel of hers, but I begin to think that is no reason for punishing you. I shall have to see my lawyer to-morrow about cancelling a very good legacy I had left to those odious Raymonds. I'll get him to restore that bit about you and your family. I'll not leave anything to Selina, though; she deserves to be punished for what she did. Besides, with her talents, she can easily originate enough to keep her.'

'You will do as you like, Mary,' said Dr. Brooke, who had no great faith in wills which were re-made so frequently. 'It is very kind of you to think of leaving me anything—leaving my family, I mean, for you will outlive me by a great number of years.'

'Do you really think I shall?' cried Mrs. Ullathorne, very eagerly; but, with a better and more kindly and truer after-thought, she added, 'Richard, it would be a very great grief to me to lose you. After all, you and I are the two who are most alike in character. We are Calverleys; we take after my mother; all the rest are more or less Brookes. Don't be low about your health; it is better, isn't it?'

'Oh yes, much. In fact, my doctor says I am well; but I am not so strong as you.'

'Oh yes, you are. I am told that Olive sent back everything she ever had from that woman.'

'Everything! I don't know that it was of much use, except to mark her disgust.'

'Give her this cheque for a hundred pounds—she will want new clothes, poor girl. She is a fine girl, Richard—very like what I used to be. I often look at her and think so. Good morning.'

Richard smiled a little, but he was touched by his sister's rough kindness.

When Mrs. Ullathorne got home she found a note from Mrs. Raymond, and, much as she wished to send it back unopened, could not resist her desire to read it. Mrs. Raymond protested that Lady Brooke was the one who was responsible for the Filoselle contract—it was she who had proposed it, negotiated it, and carried it out. Mrs. Raymond entreated her sister to suspend her judgment until she herself had time to write to Lady Brooke, to make her own that it was so. It would be cruel, she said, not to give her time to be able to prove herself innocent.

Mrs. Ullathorne smiled with joyous bitterness. 'What a state she is in because she thinks she will lose her legacy! Life is

uncertain, especially mine. I'll make my will to-morrow, as I said I would. I must have Richard's money made safe. If Esther is telling the truth, I can easily make another will. I don't believe her. But we shall see.'

Meantime Mrs. Raymond was writing thus to Lady Brooke:—

'Dear Honora,—There is nothing but trouble here. Madame Filoselle is clamorous for payment. She has been to Mary Ullathorne's. Sister Mary is furious, especially with poor me. I am made to bear the whole brunt of it. It is very unjust and cruel of her, and she is so angry that she refuses to see or speak to me. Now, I require you at once to write to her and take the whole blame on yourself. I positively insist on your doing this. If you do not the consequences will be serious to me, but they will be much more serious to you, for I will at once write and tell Chesterfield certain facts which are being kept from him by some of your family here. I will tell him all that was made known by Mary Gardiner to Olive and to Dr. Ullathorne, namely, how you persuaded Hannah Deanham to act as she did at the trial, and other matters. You see I know all. I must also say that if you had used the five hundred pounds which Chesterfield gave you for the express purpose of defraying all expenses connected with Olive's introduction into society in the manner in which he expected you to spend it, and not in bribing Hannah Deanham to quit the country again, all this vexation might have been spared us. You could then have paid Madame Filoselle's bill yourself, or at any rate a large part of it. You must have known that Olive would never marry sensibly, and yet you used the money thus. I know that you received it, for Chesterfield mentioned that in a letter to Vincent. I insist, therefore, on your taking the entire blame on yourself. It will do you no harm, for I am sorry to say that no member of our family can think worse of you than they do already, and nothing else will restore me to Sister Mary's good opinion. If she remains angry with me my life won't be worth having, for Vincent would never forgive me, and no one can put things right but you. The moment, therefore, that you receive this you must at once sit down and write as I wish, or I will at once write and put Chesterfield in possession of every fact connected with his wife's trial and his marriage with you. I am not making empty threats—I shall most assuredly do as I say.'

Thus wrote Mrs. Raymond, and forthwith despatched her letter; and if when Lady Brooke left England she had not, as usual, departed with a lie on her tongue, she would have received it. Every one had at first expected that she would go to Lausanne and take some of her girls back to India with her. She, however,

wanted a good excuse for again leaving her husband, in case his doubts about his treatment of his first wife once more made his companionship oppressive to her. In order, therefore, to account for leaving them at school a little longer, she had pretended to Mrs. Raymond that Chesterfield had written a letter urgently desiring her return without one day's delay. She had set out with apparent haste, but had spent a fortnight in Paris. She had no particular reason for wishing to stay there—she was only taking her journey easily and pleasantly; but the consequence was that Mrs. Raymond's letter reached India before she did; and Sir Chesterfield, seeing that it was from his sister Esther, opened it and read it.

CHAPTER XLV.

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease.—BLAKE.

MR. ARDROSSAN spent the night after the Private View in a state of considerable restlessness and disappointment. He had not known before how much he loved Olive. He felt, too, that he had become a good deal older all at once, and that a larger piece of his life had slipped away from him than he had been aware of. People grow older gradually, no doubt; but it is strange what distinct breaks occur to some of us, in which a period of life is, as it were, summed up and seen to be the distant thing it really is. Mr. Ardrossan felt this, and fervently wished that some one like Olive had crossed his path many years before. Puritan, philosopher, philanthropist as he was, he had always been thoroughly popular in society. He had never been tempted to isolate himself for his principles or to regard the gay world from the standpoint of a 'superior person.' His desire to serve Humanity (big-lettered) had been united with a warm-heartedness which made John and James and Mary objects to him of true liking and sympathy, while he was helping them as a matter of duty. But he had not by any means intended to remain a bachelor. Had time really gone so fast? It seemed to him only the other day that he had left Oxford—only the other day that, full of enthusiasm and zeal, he had taken the chair at his first meeting.

Perhaps he would have suffered much more if, along with his own little grief, he had not had Miss Keithley's much larger one to think of. He could not forget her or the look of keen anguish which had come into her eyes as they watched her dearest hope of happiness passing away from her. 'She was wonderfully brave at

the time,' thought he; 'but what must she be feeling now? She is a splendid girl—constant and loyal, and thoroughly unselfish. What a fellow Morrison is, to have two such women in love with him! I can read the future clearly—to-morrow, or perhaps in a week or so, to do it in an unsuspecting, quiet manner—I fancy she is one who likes to do all quietly—she will write to him, or send for him, and will tell him that she finds she has entirely mistaken the nature of her own feelings and cannot honestly let the engagement go on. From what I have seen of her I am sure that she will do this in a perfectly composed and natural way, so as to cause no suspicion in his mind that she has discovered his love for another. She will leave him free to propose to Miss Brooke, and will take care that he can do so with ease of mind and happiness, which he certainly could not if he knew the truth.'

Next day it was just the same—Mr. Ardrossan could not drive the thought of her out of his mind. Three days afterwards he went to Mulberry Street, Bethnal Green. Amongst other people there he saw Mary Gardiner. Olive's poor mother had died when, if she had lived but a few months longer, it would have been such a joy to her child—this woman, whose life appeared to be of no value to herself or to anyone, was living still, and likely to live for six months. Struggling with this thought, he left her room, and as he emerged from the dark staircase to the light of day outside, he saw Miss Keithley and her aunt Mrs. Ullathorne (of Bethnal Green) coming up the street.

It was no new thing for Mr. Ardrossan to meet Mrs. Ullathorne when going his rounds in his district. She was constantly to be seen in every corner of her husband's parish; and Mr. Ardrossan would have gone home with a sense of loss and strangeness if he had not somewhere encountered the good lady, with her well-worn black bonnet and grey waterproof, and her umbrella, which she carried for some mysterious reason, in spite of her own assertion that she had 'nothing on that could spoil.' Such as she was, she always looked at home in these sordid smoke-grimed streets; but pretty Miss Keithley, in her fresh print dress and white straw bonnet trimmed with lace and cowslips, looked like an unexpected flash of light in them. Miss Keithley had a basket of roots in her hand, which she was taking to a bit of waste ground left by pulling down some shops and warehouses. Mr. Ardrossan had bought this, and, with some expense of ingenuity and labour, had turned it into a playground and garden for the children of the neighbourhood; and now even poor Rose Keithley was trying to do something to make it prettier for them by planting a few flowers likely to be strong enough to prosper in such an uncongenial atmosphere. He

had had no faith in any flower being able to hold up its head here, and had therefore contented himself with giving a large order for hardy ferns and evergreens; but she, perhaps, felt that even if her flowers did die in a month or two they would die in a good cause, having, at any rate, given some pleasure before their lives came to an end. He was pleased with her gracious thought. He looked earnestly in her face to see if he had been right in his conjecture as to what her conduct would be. Had she broken off her engagement with William Morrison; and if so, how was she bearing her separation from him? He was certain that she had done this—he could see proof of it in every line of her face. Her eyes were heavy with sleeplessness, her cheeks pale and worn, and there was an air of patient suffering about her which was infinitely touching; but, manifest as these signs of suffering were, there was equal evidence of fortitude and strong resolution. It was very kind and sweet of her to think of brightening the lives of his poor gutter-children, when her own troubles were so absorbing; but her own life wanted brightening—she ought to have a thorough change of scene, and be taken away from everything which could remind her of her loss. On the spur of the moment he devised a plan which seemed good in his eyes, and with equal promptitude he laid it before her.

‘Miss Keithley, you paint,’ said he. ‘I hope you won’t be offended if I ask you to take a commission from me—I know you paint landscapes. I want you to paint me twelve half-imperial-sized views of foreign towns. I have a very particular use for them for one of my great undertakings, and I especially want them to be done by a lady.’

Miss Keithley looked very much confused and astonished, and stammered that she was completely unworthy to be entrusted with such a commission—she could not paint half well enough.

‘Oh yes, you can: you painted that very pretty drawing of St. Hilda’s, in the Ellesmere Gallery. I saw it there yesterday. I liked it so much that I bought it.’

A glow of pleasure overspread Rose Keithley’s wan face. Had life still something to offer her? If she could do work which was worth doing, she could find happiness in that—it might not be the transcendent happiness she had hoped for when she found she was to have him she loved always with her; but work has its joys, and she knew it.

‘If I thought I could do them well enough,’ said she, ‘there is nothing I should like so much. I have never been abroad, and the very idea of going is delightful. I’d give anything to go—anything. I have wished it for years.’

Mr. Ardrossan was delighted. 'Then you will let me consider it arranged?' said he.

'But I can't go alone,' said Miss Keithley. 'At least, can I?' she added, for she was hardly in the habit of looking on herself as a young and good-looking woman, who would excite attention or admiration.

'No, you must have a companion; but no doubt you have some friend who will be willing to go. I leave the choice of subjects to you; but, if I may make a suggestion, I should like the Italian towns.'

Better and better! The dream of Rosamond Keithley's youth had been to earn enough money by her painting to enable her some day to travel and see Venice and Verona, and Rome and Naples—cities whose very names seem to make you richer whenever you hear them.

'I should like you to go as soon as you can—at once, if possible,' said Mr. Ardrossan, who was sure that the sooner she went the better would be her chance of recovering peace of mind.

'It is finding the companion which is so difficult,' said she in a low voice to Mrs. Ullathorne. 'I might, perhaps, persuade Aunt Amelia to go with me—the complete change would do her good, I am sure.'

'Aunt Amelia' was the invalid aunt who had been with Miss Keithley at St. Hilda's. Mrs. Ullathorne made a gesture of horror as soon as she heard her name, and cried, 'Oh, no; that's quite out of the question. You must not think of it for a moment. Mr. Ardrossan wants you to paint him some pictures, and to have some pleasure while you are doing them. If you took your aunt Amelia with you, you would have to spend all your time in waiting on her. Rose, I do wish you would sometimes think of what is good for yourself. You have friends who paint: choose one of them.'

'We need not discuss this now,' said Rosamond to Mr. Ardrossan. 'I will do my best to go quickly.'

Mr. Ardrossan had been watching the faces of both ladies while this journey was being discussed, and had seen a look in Mrs. Ullathorne's which plainly showed that she regarded it as a joy of too ecstatic a nature ever to come within the reach of a poor hard-worked City clergyman's wife, whose treadmill of duty claimed her for ever. Mr. Ardrossan and Mrs. Ullathorne had worked together in these busy streets for nearly twenty years, and he knew her to be as good a creature as ever breathed, and one with whom Rosamond could be quite happy.

'Couldn't you spare time to go with Miss Keithley?' said he.

‘You would be doing me a great service if you could; so, if you say yes, you must allow me to be your banker. Don’t say no. I can get a person whom I know to be trustworthy to take charge of such of your work as must be done while you are away, and I will undertake to persuade the dear old Doctor to let you go.’

Mrs. Ullathorne looked bewildered. A pleasure which had always seemed to be unattainable was suddenly placed within her grasp. ‘I should be only too happy; that is, if you think it could possibly be arranged,’ said she, sighing with suppressed delight.

‘And people tell you not to set too high a value on riches!’ thought Mr. Ardrossan. ‘What folly that is! Thank God for the wealth He has given me, and thank Him also for the opportunity of sharing it with others. You can’t set too high a value on riches. If I had been a man of small means, these two poor women would have missed what they evidently think a great pleasure.’

All this time they were walking together to the playground, and talking as best they could. Sometimes their way led them through wide streets, full of warehouses, where speech was often interrupted by a great sack of flour or barrel of oil coming swinging down from some window far above to the wagon which was to bear it away. The noise of these wagons as they rolled along, full or empty, was deafening—it was almost impossible to hear what was said; and in the back streets and alleys it was equally difficult to keep up a conversation, for there they were obliged to pick their way one by one through groups of women, who seemed to be standing about for no particular reason—bonnetless for the most part, and shrouded in well-worn Paisley shawls, which probably covered up innumerable shortcomings in dress. Little children were there too, looking pale and prematurely old. And no wonder, for all that makes life bright and happy was denied them—the streets where they played were dirty thoroughfares, littered with straw and refuse of every kind, and the air was so full of smoke that it could be tasted. ‘Poor things,’ said Mr. Ardrossan to himself, ‘how little one can do for them! How little, indeed, for any one!’ But even while this thought was passing through his mind, he saw a look in Rosamond Keithley’s eyes which showed that he had been able to do something for her. She had evidently begun to think that life had a future; and as for Mrs. Ullathorne, she was positively almost skipping along the pavement.

The playground was occupied by groups of children, swinging and playing in any way they best fancied. ‘Some of them must

have been swinging all night,' said a bystander of Mrs. Ullathorne's acquaintance. 'They were hard at it when I went to bed; and when I looked out at four this morning, it was just the same.'

Mr. Ardrossan glanced round in some discontent. The work of growth was not going on fast enough for him. He wished his trees to rise up in one night like the beanstalk of happy memory and shut out the smoky houses, so bedizened with flaring advertisements. At present every commodity of commerce was pressed on the notice of those who enjoyed the garden. Every house which hemmed it in had its blue or red board with gigantic yellow letters. Here, too, you had the head-quarters of the Army of Salvation, with its war-cry well printed and legible; and face to face with it, on the opposite side of the enclosure, a theatre and a gin-palace; the latter painted emerald green and mauve in one part, dark red and yellow ochre in another; and the whole 'pointed' up with crimson and blue.

'Oh, never mind a little bright colour,' exclaimed Mrs. Ullathorne, who saw what was disturbing him. 'The children like it, —I like it too; so would you, if you lived here.'

'Should I really?' cried he, with a look of such horror that she could not help laughing heartily.

'The ground is prettily laid out,' said she, gazing with great satisfaction on the hard asphalt paths and great heaps of bricks which were piled up in methodical-looking beds and waiting to be made into ferneries.

'I don't know, I am sure; the shrubs look well enough; but I want to see the ferns green and growing,' said he.

Rosamond Keithley shared his desire; but she was doing something more to the point than that—she had taken a trowel out of her basket and was planting her flowers. Seeing her thus engaged, Mr. Ardrossan said to Mrs. Ullathorne, 'I shall send Miss Keithley a cheque for half the price of these drawings to-night. Will you tell me if you think I shall be right in assuming that they will be the same price as that of the same size in the Ellesmere?'

'Quite right,' cried Mrs. Ullathorne, who knew nothing whatever about it, but was sure that Mr. Ardrossan could never be wrong. 'How kind you are to propose to do that!—you remember everything. Dear Mr. Ardrossan, this is such a lucky thought of yours!—so very lucky, for poor Rose is not at all happy just now. In fact, I can't help thinking she is very miserable. She wouldn't like me to tell you, perhaps—so don't say anything to show that I have done so—but she has broken off her engage-

ment with Mr. Morrison. She says she does not love him enough to marry him; but I am sure—I don't know—I saw her crying after she had done it, and I always thought she was very fond of him—as fond as any one could be.'

Mr. Ardrossan had known instinctively that she would do this, so he could not honestly show any surprise. 'And what did Morrison say when she did it?' he asked.

'Oh, he behaved remarkably well—he did everything he could to persuade her to let the engagement go on. He couldn't have behaved better; but she still said she was firmly resolved to break off with him.'

'Then I suppose that's how it ended—he was obliged to let her do as she wished?'

'Well, of course a man has not much alternative when a girl speaks so very decidedly; but he refuses to take her answer as final. He says he wishes her to think it over for six months, after which time he will come to her; and then, if she still declares that she does not love him enough to marry him, he will accept his dismissal, but not till then.'

'In other words, he won't profit by his release until he is quite certain that she knows her own mind,' thought Mr. Ardrossan. 'I expected him to behave like a gentleman.'

They now went and watched Rose Keithley planting her roots: evening primroses, wallflowers, snapdragons, pinks, campanulas, and sweet-williams—there was nothing very rare about the contents of her basket; but still in a month or two the playground would look all the brighter for what she was doing.

'It is nice to see those children have room to stretch their legs,' said Mrs. Ullathorne. 'I don't think rich folks imagine what it must be to have nothing but a narrow street to play in—I think if they did, some of the money which goes by thousands to hospitals to help to cure bad diseases would be given to provide open spaces, by way of doing something to prevent them.'

'Mr. Ardrossan,' said Rose Keithley, who had now planted all her flowers, 'the more I think of your kind scheme, the more delightful it seems to me.'

CHAPTER XLVI.

Phædrus. This is the tree.

Socrates. Yes, indeed, and a fair and shady resting-place, full of summer sounds and scents.—PLATO: *Phædrus*.

I lay me on the grass : yet to my will,
Albeit all is fair, there lacketh something still.

CHATTERTON.

‘AND so we awoke, and we rose in the dark, and got with our bags and our brushes to work,’ said Morrison to himself as, about five months after the date of the last chapter, he thrust his neck into the yoke of a large sketching-bag, caught up a sketching-folio, and prepared to leave a very comfortable hotel in Dieppe, where he had been staying the last six weeks, for his morning’s work. He must have been in tolerable spirits, or this adaptation of Blake’s ‘Chimney-Sweeper’ would not have presented itself so readily to his mind ; but in point of fact he was not getting up in the dark at all. That was a fiction indulged in for poetical purposes. In reality it was just half-past seven, and a beautiful September morning ; and besides that, he was not going out one bit earlier than a host of other people, especially some young ladies who were at the very same time making their way down to the beach to bathe, with stout towels on their arms, and their seaside back-hair nicely arranged to float about in the sweet haze of early autumn sunshine. As Morrison was leaving the hotel, two of them had come into the garden which surrounded it, and were standing under the bedroom windows of a certain ‘Janie,’ as he gathered from their discourse, and trying to persuade her to go and bathe with them. ‘Janie’ appeared to hesitate—she was sure it would be cold, she said Morrison thought she only wanted pressing ; but the two outside were not disposed to take much trouble about her. ‘We can’t wait,’ said one. ‘I do wish you would come ; but if you won’t—you won’t.’ On this, of course, ‘Janie’ shook her head with vigorous decision—persuasion would have softened her. The bathers turned to go. ‘Oh, by-the-by,’ cried one, ‘have you seen the “Times,” Janie?’

‘No. Is there anything nice in it?’

‘Nothing very particular—only I was right about that Mr. Ardrossan—I was sure I was at the time. He has married the girl he was always going about with in Rome. I told you he would. I wish I had had a good big bet on it, though.’

Mr. Ardrossan married! Morrison turned back and ran into

the hotel again, to have a look at the 'Times' and see the name of the lady, and there he read:—

'At the British Embassy, Rome, John Ardrossan, Esq., of 83 Grosvenor Place, London, and Glen Duich, Rosshire, N.B., to Rosamond, only daughter of the late Walter Keithley, of Gower Street, London.'

Then he was free to love Olive! He had been faithful to Rosamond Keithley. He had given her six months in which to make up her mind whether she could be happy with him or no, and until he got her answer he had thought it right to avoid Olive. Now an answer had come which was sufficient. Miss Keithley had said at the time that her decision was final, and had declined this offer of more time for thought; but as he had made it he considered himself bound, and bound, too, if at the end of the period she should come and say, 'I can never love any one as I love you.' Now he was free! Now he would go to Olive! For this day, however, he was loyally true to his drawing—it wanted more time, and should have the whole day; but he painted with a happy hope in his mind—there was just a chance that she might listen now.

Two days afterwards Mrs. Brooke was sitting with her two pretty young daughters, when Mr. Morrison was announced. He looked round the room for Olive; but no Olive was there; and when he asked where she was Mrs. Brooke said, 'She has been in Cornwall, with us and her aunt Alice, and now she has gone down to Yorkshire, with her other aunt, Miss Lettice Brooke. Oh, by-the-by, Mr. Morrison, you know Austerfield—that's where she has gone.'

'When did she go?' he asked.

'Only this morning. If you had come yesterday you would have seen her. Now I don't know when you will have a chance of doing that, for she won't be back here for ever so long.'

Morrison smiled. There were other places in the world in which he might see Olive besides Mrs. Brooke's drawing-room. He could not help thinking that, though a novelist and given to making plots herself, his dear friend was not quick at seeing plots which arranged themselves. This thought made him put a question. He had already been surprised to find her sitting reading to her daughters instead of writing as usual; so he asked if she had given up writing.

'Oh no,' was her reply; 'I have not given it up, I hope—the Doctor will not let me do that—but still I don't see how I am ever to go back to it. I find such dozens of things to do; in fact, I am rapidly becoming so firmly woven into the web of family life

that I sometimes think I shall never be able to break loose from it again.'

Morrison stayed some time, and while he was thus talking and thinking of her, Olive was on her way to Austerfield. At last she had got permission to go there. As soon as she found herself in Yorkshire she was full of eager interest, and began to persecute Miss Lettice with questions; though all she could draw from her in reference to Austerfield was, 'You won't care for it as you used to do.'

'Well, at any rate the Grange is as beautiful as I remember it!' exclaimed Olive, gazing fondly at the venerable lichened walls, all overgrown with flowering shrubs. 'And you have the very same chintz!' she cried when she went into her bedroom, for there were the parroquets as bright and busy as ever. 'It is the same; and my bed in London has had ever so many sets of new curtains! And, oh! how delightful! the books are still there!' She looked out of the window—there was the garden brilliant with autumn flowers. She went to the looking-glass, almost expecting to see her own childish face reflected in it; but when she announced her intention of having a run round the garden she was told that dinner was ready; and when dinner was over it was dark.

Next day she resolved to make her rounds in the order which she had observed as a child. First came the garden. It was lovely; and so was the orchard, too, with hoary old fruit-trees covered with large rosy-cheeked apples; but she could find no dark or dangerous places, nor yet any which seemed as if they could ever have been lawfully regarded as such. She opened the wicket-gate which led from the garden to the churchyard. She went to the old stone coffin in which she and Willie had sat so often; then she walked round and looked at the tombstones. She found those of her grandfather and grandmother, and then that which bore the names of Willie's poor grandmother, his butcher-uncle, and some unknown cousins. Another tombstone, with an enormous lily carved on it, marked the grave of the only person in the village of whom Olive had a disagreeable recollection—a certain ill-tempered farmer, from whose tongue appallingly bad words were never absent. It was odd to put a lily on *his* tomb. Next she visited the village. It was a mere collection of dull cottages. She went to the humble home where Willie's young years had been spent. She had always recalled it as a nice little stone house, standing in its own garden. It was a four-roomed cottage, with a water-butt almost as big as itself standing by the door; a sanded doorstep and passage, and a strip of cabbage-garden at the side, with an

ill-kept hedge, almost smothered with weeds. 'It is terribly depressing to see these places,' thought she. 'And yet, how angry I was with poor Willie for saying that Austerfield was a commonplace village!' Then she went to the field where Willie had hidden himself behind the corn-sheaves, and after that she walked to the Ayton Bank farm. What a long, long walk it had seemed then, and how quickly she got there now! and besides that, it was as unromantic and unpicturesque a walk as could have been found anywhere. She could have sat down and wept, her disappointment was so bitterly keen.

But she had kept the dearest spot of all till the last. At six o'clock in the evening she had always met Willie at a certain lime-tree in the prettiest field far or near, and there most of their time had been spent. That she knew was beautiful, and could not disappoint her. When the hour came she went. The field was very pretty and irregular, and through the midst of it came the rapid little stream she remembered so well. There was a time when not a corner of that field was unconnected with some delight. She walked through it now. She entered the little wood—the wood with dangerous places, and long leaps which might be successful and land you on the opposite bank, or might but deposit you in water too deep for safety, for here the channel of the stream was narrow. There seemed to be no place now where she could not step over with ease. It was pretty, it was nice, but it did not stir her heart, except so far as it was associated with Willie.

She returned to the lime-tree and seated herself on the great bare root on which she and Willie had always sat. She had wished to revisit these places for years, and had hoped to be so happy when she did so, and this joy also had proved a mere mockery, as every other joy to which she had ever looked forward had done. She covered her face with her hands and wept when she thought what an unhappy girl she was. She did not believe that there was another girl in England so unhappy as she. And she was not miserable without a cause. Her troubles were substantial things—hard to bear at the time, and such as would leave their mark for life. Her early youth had been happy, but she had never been happy since. From the age of ten she had lived stinted of the love which a child has a right to expect, with bricks and pavement as food for her eyes, and dull lessons as food for her mind. Then came that hateful time with her stepmother, during which she had suddenly discovered that she had a mother of her own. How the discovery had delighted her! But she had found her mother only to lose her. Besides this grief, the disgrace which stained

her family was intolerable to her—her mother's divorce, which was still held to be a just sentence—the fact that her own father's sister could make such a dishonourable contract as Mrs. Raymond had done—there were so many things to make her hide her head in shame! And Willie! There was another deep disappointment. She had longed for years to be reunited to him; and when she did see him again, how had he treated her? She was not thinking of his behaviour in the train—that she had forgiven long ago—his heroic conduct afterwards had quite thrown into the shade anything he had done to offend her; nay, more, had won her admiration for life. Besides, her own conscience told her that all he then said was true, and that her mode of life at that time was not such as a man of his stamp could care for. It was afterwards that he had treated her so ill. He had seemed to love her—had asked her to marry him, and then in an incredibly short space of time had engaged himself to another woman! How could he do so? How could any man be so fickle? With feminine perversity, in which she was by no means deficient, she did not take her refusal of him into account at all. 'He might,' thought she, 'have seen that my head was quite full of something else—of something very important, which was making me far too unhappy to be able to think of love or of him—he might have waited till that was over. Besides, if he cared for me at all, how could he change so quickly? I turned to him directly my mind was my own again and I was able to think of him and knew he loved me. I believe I have loved him all my life—not, perhaps, as an existing person, but as one of whom I dreamed; and when his flowers came I loved him just as much as ever, for I knew he was as nice as he used to be, or he would not have thought of sending them to me. But to go and get engaged so quickly!'

A slight sound startled her. She turned, and Morrison stood behind her. His train had brought him to Austerfield just in time to go to the old trysting-place at the old time. She rose to her feet, but was too much startled to speak. He too was scarcely able to speak, for he had said to himself all the way as he came, 'If she cares for me at all, I think some feeling will make her, on this first night of being at Austerfield, visit our old place of meeting at the same hour that we used to go.' He had said this, and she was there; and when he saw her, his face grew radiant with happiness and his eyes bright with hope.

'How do you do, Mr. Morrison?' said Olive rather stiffly. 'I did not expect to see you here.' She was terribly mortified that he should have found her where she was.

'No, of course you did not,' said he ; ' but I had just a very faint hope that I might find you.'

'There are not many walks in Austerfield,' said she ; ' one has to go to such as there are.'

'I wanted,' he said, ' to think that you came here, as I myself should always come, for the sake of former times—with some wish to see a place where I had spent so many hours—so many happy hours.'

'Of course I did,' replied Olive. 'I have been to all the places where I used to play when I was a child, so naturally I came to this as well as the others.'

'I saw Mrs. Brooke yesterday,' said he ; ' she told me that you had left London for Yorkshire that very day.'

'You were in London yesterday? Then, did you come here to-day?' asked Olive, much surprised, and not at all pleased.

'Yes, I came to-day, because I wanted to see you.'

'To see me?' she said coldly ; for, under the circumstances, engaged as he was to another woman, she did not approve of his wishing so much to see her.

'Yes, to see you—the one person whom of all others I shall always most wish to see. Miss Brooke,' he said hastily, 'sit down again one minute—you were sitting when I came. Sit down and listen to something which I must say to you.'

'Oh no, it is late. I must go home,' said Olive confusedly. 'What have you to say to me, Mr. Morrison?'

'Much—everything—you must listen.'

'Oh, by-the-by,' said Olive, 'I am quite forgetting to ask how Miss Keithley is—do tell me.'

'Miss Keithley has married Mr. Ardrossan. He has got as noble a woman as ever lived. That's why I am here. I should not have been speaking to you now had it not been for this marriage ; but, whether I came or stayed away, I should always have set you far above her and all other women.'

'What! when you were engaged to her?' cried Olive.

'Yes, even when I was engaged to her. Miss Brooke, be generous—I will explain everything to you hereafter—but trust me when I say I have not behaved ill about her. I thought it right to ask her to marry me. If you had not been in the world, I have no doubt I should have loved her much more than I did. I did feel a very strong affection for her, though it was not real love. It was a mistake to offer to her ; but she was the one to discover that, not I. She said she found she could never be happy with me. I was afraid that she had divined that you were the one whom I always had loved, and always would love ; but it seems I was wrong. However, I refused to let our engagement be broken

off until she had waited six months, to see if after all she could not be happy with me. She has married Mr. Ardrossan before the six months have expired. I am free. I seek you again—I shall never love any woman but you. You may think me foolish, or what you will, but I believe I have loved you ever since the day we first met. I only know that ever since that time I have never done anything without some secret reference to you. Every picture has been painted with the thought that your dear eyes might see it; and every time ~~we were~~ praised, I thought, “She may see that it is well spoken of. She may, perhaps, understand how I am trying my ~~hardest~~ ^{best} to bring myself one step nearer to her.” I know I am presumptuous; I know how much more so I must seem here, where there is everything to remind you what a poor little village boy I was when you first knew me; but still, if you could but love me, I do not think you are one who would care what my relations were. Olive, do love me—I can’t live without you—I have loved you all my life.’

During this long speech Olive had sat quietly, but her heart had been deeply stirred. Now she did not look up, but said very gently, ‘Won’t you sit down beside me—here, in your old place?’ And she moved a little farther along the rugged old gnarled root. Morrison’s head swam with the joy of a hope to which he dared not allow himself to trust. He sat down by her side. He looked at her. Her head was bent down, her hands were lying on her lap. He said, in a voice full of suppressed emotion, ‘When we sat here together before we always sat hand-in-hand.’

Her head sank lower and lower. She did not seem angry with him, but she did not speak.

‘Do speak to me,’ cried he. ‘Tell me if I may dare to hope. You do not check me, but you give me no hope.’

She was still silent. She was wondering to herself how it was that now, when she so much wanted to speak to him, she could not force her lips to utter one single sound. She tried repeatedly, but still could not.

‘I am distressing you,’ said he, ‘but I must. I have come all the way from France just to say this to you. It is no new thing on my part to feel thus—I said the same thing to you in the winter; I have wished to say it for years. Nothing but my own consciousness that I had no right to approach you with such a proposal has kept me away from you so long. I am still unworthy to offer myself to you, but I have more hope than I had of making a position for myself of which you won’t be ashamed; and if you would but love me, dear Olive, I should work a thousand times better. You don’t know how I would work and try to do

good things.' Having said this, he looked in her face so earnestly that it seemed as if no feeling of her heart could be hidden from him. 'Make some sign if you wish me to be silent on this subject for ever,' said he, pitying her; and then he watched her with a sickening dread lest the sign for which he had asked should be given to him.

She made no sign. She even attempted to raise her shy eyes to his and let him see that there was a gleam of love and trust in them, but they fell under his gaze almost before they met it.

Do not bless me by halves. "Or love me ~~in all~~ in all, or love me not at all." Now that a glimpse of hope seems to be vouchsafed me, I feel as if I must have all or nothing. Can you love me, Olive?' And as he spoke he held out his hand.

She saw his outstretched hand, and slowly laid hers in it. There was a moment's silence, and then she spoke, and her words came swiftly, and apparently without an effort. "Can I love you?" you ask. I believe I have loved you all the time. I am quite sure I have never loved any one else. It seems to me that you are the only one who can make my life perfect.'

Morrison's heart leaped for joy. Not only had she accepted him, but she was expressing the very thought which made one of the chief delights of his love for her. She alone could make his life a perfect whole. His love for her ran back as far as memory could reach. It had gladdened his boyhood, elevated his youth, and, please God, should elevate and sustain him as long as life lasted. 'My darling Olive!' he cried, tightly clasping her hand, which now as of old lay so contentedly in his, 'how shall I ever thank you enough? We always have loved each other, and we always will. Now we will be so happy. You did not look happy when I came to you.'

'I was miserable—very miserable. I was counting up my losses, and I seemed to have lost everything. I felt quite alone in the world.' A loving pressure of the hand told her that that grief was hers no longer. 'And I was vexed to find Austerfield so ugly.'

'It is not ugly!' he cried, in his turn indignant. 'It may not be what is called beautiful scenery, but it is just as beautiful as we were fitted for. To us the world was summed up in this one field. It held all that we were capable of admiring. It contained a specimen in miniature of every kind of beauty in nature. Its hill seemed almost mountainous to us, and yet we had strength to climb it. Its beck had dangerous rapids, and deep and sullen pools, and was so broad that we had prudently to choose a safe spot for the bold venture of crossing it. Now we wonder where the difficulty could be. Then the wood was big enough for us to lose

ourselves in. No, it's not ugly, but small. But, Olive, what made you not care for it just now, and what made me not care for it when I was here before, was that we were alone. We were never alone when we were here before: how happy we were together! We must never part more.'

'You are right,' said Olive. 'It was because I was alone. Once, when I was a child, I was just as miserable, and saw no beauty or pleasure in anything. It was that day when I thought you had left me to go to see some wild-beasts; but, after all, you had stayed at home for my sake. It was the last day we were together—do you remember?'

'Do I remember? I remember everything—every single thing that happened that day.'

Olive blushed, for she too remembered that day, and how she had flung her arms round his neck and kissed him, and told him she should love him for ever and ever.

'Don't mind my remembering everything so well. My recollections are very delightful.'

'We were happy children,' said Olive. 'The only sorrow we ever had was that our flowers would fade. We decorated a bower with garlands, and cried because they withered in a day. Oh, look at the sun! How beautiful it makes everything! It is like magic.'

Long rays of crimson were streaming across the field and glorifying all that they touched. She watched with admiring eyes, but truthfulness compelled her to add, 'I dare say I should have thought that ugly too if you had not come.'

They watched the sun till it sank below the horizon; then Olive said, 'I must go home. Aunt Lettice will be anxious if I don't. You will come with me, won't you? Oh, Willie, I am so happy!'

She was still happier when she entered the house, for Miss Lettice came to meet her with a letter in her hand—a letter with an Indian stamp. It was from her father:—

My child (wrote Sir Chesterfield), I have heard everything. You and your dear mother thought it kinder to keep the painful knowledge from me, but you were wrong. The fear that she had possibly been treated with injustice and cruelty has tormented me for years. That dread would never have left me, howsoever well you kept the secret. Now that my most painful fears are confirmed, and, besides that, I find that my dear wife is lost to me for ever, one thing only remains for me to do—to come home, and so long as life is left to me try to be a good father to you. God bless you, my own dear ill-used child. You will see me soon after you receive this. Try to forgive me and love me as your father. Full justice shall be done your dear mother's memory. I feel heartbroken when I think of all that she must have suffered. My darling, if you can forgive me for having treated you with such neglect, the remaining years of my life shall be spent in trying to make yours more happy. I long to be with you, for your mother's sake and for your own.

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CHESTERFIELD BROOKE.

A Madrigal.

I.

BEFORE me careless lying,
 Young Love his ware comes crying ;
 Full soon the elf untreaures
 His pack of pains and pleasures,—
 With roguish eye
 He bids me buy
 From out his pack of treasures.

II.

His wallet's stuffed with blisses,
 With true-love-knots and kisses,
 With rings and rosy fetters,
 And sugared vows and letters ;—
 He holds them out
 With boyish flout,
 And bids me try the fetters.

III.

Nay, Child (I cry), I know them ;
 There's little need to show them !
 Too well for new believing
 I know their past deceiving,—
 I am too old
 (I say) and cold,
 To-day, for new believing !

IV.

But still the wanton presses,
 With honey-sweet caresses,
 And still, to my undoing,
 He wins me, with his wooing,
 To buy his wares
 With all their cares,
 Their sorrow and undoing !

AUSTIN DOBSON.

BELGRAVIA.

JANUARY 1881.

Joseph's Coat.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

PROLOGUE.—CHAPTER I.

OLD JOE and young Joe, sturdy sire and lissome son, trudged through the dust together—old Joe bent down a little earthwards, and going rather like a carthorse; young Joe with his head well up, and stepping like a hunter that can carry weight. I see them in my mind's eye, as in a picture. Old Joe, dressed in white moleskin of such weight and thickness that he looked like a polar bear, with his gnarled hands hanging lazily and solidly as if each carried a hundredweight which his gigantic strength made light of,—blue-eyed, grey-whiskered, with deep blue scars like tattoo marks all over his face,—tramped on serenely, pipe in mouth. Young Joe, with a sprouting bit of whisker downy as yet, and yellow like a callow fledgling's feathers; blue-eyed, broad-shouldered, lithe and limber, went springily at the old man's side. Young Joe was dressed like a gentleman of that period (it is nearly thirty years since the father and son walked side by side for the last time), and he and the old man made altogether a fine contrast. Old Joe was stolidly genial, as befitted a man who had beaten the world hollow and now took his ease with dignity. Young Joe had something of an aggressive air, or carried at least a sort of warning in his face—*nemo me impune lacessit*. This warning was perhaps a trifle sulky, as was natural, all things considered. How rich old Joe might be no man knew, but he clung to the dress and habits of his youth—dressed like a working miner on holiday, lived like a miner, looked like a miner, and was proud to talk like one. Young Joe, bred at a distant 'college school,' and returning home only at holiday times, resented these things. His speech was of

the finest, his clothes were of the best—the son of a baronet was his chosen chum, he had yearnings towards the world of fashion, and believed that he could shine in that bright sphere, if he had but a chance. Old Joe cared for none of those things, and, except for a certain sturdy self-possession, had no pride. He would have met the hereditary Autocrat of All the Russias with a sentiment of equality so natural that he would not have dreamed of formulating it even to himself. Young Joe formulated *his* beliefs in the equality of mankind daily, and, with a natural want of logic, resented with great *hauteur* the approach of any of his father's old and less prosperous companions. He himself was 'a man for a' that'—*cela va sans dire*—but 'for a' that and a' that,' the claims of one's social inferiors must be repelled and beaten down. He was the equal of any man above him, but no one below him had a right to a similar claim. This mental attitude is not uncommon.

Young Joe resented his name, and would have preferred Reginald, or Herbert, or Walter, or anything rather than Joseph, so easily susceptible of a vulgar abbreviation. He was not without pride in his father, but he resented the old man's clothes, and his house, and his speech. And most bitterly and shamefacedly of all, he resented the spectacle he was now on his way to witness.

It was summer weather, in days when summer weather meant warmth and sunshine. There was sunshine even here, though the scene lay in the centre of the Black Country. It is pleasant to notice how nature has reasserted herself in that grimy province after all the scars which labour has left upon her. Labour has dug deep into her heart, and has rifled her very entrails, and has set upon her breast such burdens as Enceladus lay under. Yet, wheresoever you see her face, she smiles; wheresoever her busy hands can move, she weaves her spells. Tall purple foxgloves lined the road, and the hawthorns were white with blossom, and the lark shook with the delight of his own song a mile above the smoke wreaths. It was Sunday also, and the smoke wreaths were something thinner and even fewer than they would have been on any other day in the seven. Old Joe had a little of the quiet Sabbath feeling on him. Young Joe, pridefully resenting all things, resented Sunday terribly because of the shame it brought him.

Father and son were on their way to listen to the most popular preacher of the time and neighbourhood. That preacher was a woman. Nay, the murder must out; that woman was Rebecca Bushell, old Joe's wife and young Joe's mother. On the subject of female preachers in general young Joe had incisive opinions, sharpened probably by some personal feeling. That his mother

should preach, and be publicly advertised to preach, and that she should speak in public with no disguise of that picturesque and drawling accent which was her birthright, was an affliction which the lad's pride had borne with groaning this many a day. And now, worse than all, here was his mother—in combination with greasy-complexioned professionals, whom he knew, in seedy black and ties of dubious white, and roomy shoes topped by too-visible stockings of white cotton, also dubious in tone—conducting a camp-meeting, advertised far and wide in flaring posters, and sure to bring, with crowds of the pious, countless railers, to many of whom he himself was known. The reader will understand the term 'camp-meeting' in a limited sense. It was a camp-meeting with no encampment, and lasted one day only.

As father and son walked together, there was heard suddenly the bray of a band, drowning the lark's music, and far and wide the sound of the Hallelujah Chorus filled the fields. It was not ignobly played or sung, though band and choir alike needed a little fining here and there. The folk of the Black Country are essentially musical, and here they played and sang with all their heart and soul and lungs. There was a little admixture of strings with the wind instruments, and a tailor led the violins. 'Now, David,' cried the drummer, as he grasped his sticks, 'let thy elbow fly like a lamb's tail!' and David nodded to this encouragement, and led the way at a rattling pace. Whilst the band and choir were in the midst of their fervour, the two late comers took their place at the edge of the vast crowd. There were some five-and-twenty thousand people present, and the gathering could scarcely fail to be impressive. The place of meeting had some advantages and some disadvantages. For one thing, the crowd was sundered by the waters of a canal; but as a set-off against this, the lock over which the platform was built stood some ten or twelve feet above the hollow land in which the multitude had gathered, so that all could at least see the orators of the day. The platform was primitive but secure, and consisted of great beams of timber laid from wall to wall of the lock; and in the centre was another smaller platform on which the more prominent of the promoters of the meeting were gathered. They were a rugged set for the most part, and the presence of one or two massive women added little refinement to this central knot. Mrs. Bushell sat in black silk—square, hard, uncompromising in face and figure—at the little unclothed deal table with red legs, on which were set a water-bottle, a glass, a Bible, and a few scattered hymn-books. Young Joe, discerning here and there an acquaintance in the crowd, blushed at the figure on the platform and

revolted at its presence there. One gentleman, the son of a neighbouring coalowner, beholding young Joe, waited until he caught his eye, and then, from his coign of vantage near the lock gates, elaborately winked at him. At this and a slight backward motion of the head, indicating the chief personage on the platform, the youngster turned scarlet, but he held his head erect and felt savagely defiant—not least defiant, perhaps, of his mother and the prominence of her place. Old Joe, with his massive hands depending downwards, smoked his clay calmly at the edge of the crowd by his son's side. These *al-fresco* religious observances had one especial charm for the elder Bushell: they found room for a pipe; and without the soothing influence of his tube of clay, the old man found the best of sermons dull.

Young Joe's resentfulness of humour increased as he stood by his father's side. But he was there to brave the whole thing out, and to show to his friends that he was not ashamed of his father and mother and their ways. But why, in the name of all things abominable, would his father insist on wearing moleskin clothing and on smoking a clay pipe at such a place and time? and why should his mother sit there, the centre of these vulgar orators, gazed at by all these vulgar eyes? He was not ashamed of them, he told himself. Was he not here of his own free will? He grew more and more wrathful and rebellious as he nursed these thoughts.

By-and-by, after the due introductory readings and prayers had been gone through, and when a hymn had been sung with rough and striking grandeur of tone, Mrs. Rebecca Bushell rose squarely up, and gave out her text and preached. I suppose that everybody who reads this will have some notion of what a revival sermon is like, and that there is therefore no need for me to set down Mrs. Bushell's utterances. The creed she unfolded was stern and ugly, though modified by some private tenderness of her own, and young Joe knew well enough that much of the discourse was levelled at himself. The presence of her son gave her speech a passionate earnestness which it would otherwise have missed, and she preached at the crowd through him, and at him through the crowd. This also young Joe resented, and savagely endured. It came to an end at last, and twenty-five thousand pairs of lungs aided the band in giving breath to the Old Hundredth, which rolled its slow grand stream of sound across the sunny fields, and was heard, soft and sweet with distance, in the Sabbath streets of the town a mile away.

The crowd broke into scattered sections and took its devious

way towards a mid-day dinner. The old man and his son passed to the platform.

'Joseph,' said Rebecca, descending, 'put that pipe away. For shame—on a Sunday, an' at meeting too.'

'All right, missis,' said Bushell senior. 'There's no harm in a pipe.' And he smoked on placidly.

His wife, knowing by old experience the uselessness of opposition, resigned the point with a sigh and walked gravely away with the Reverend Paul Screed.

In these days in which I write the Reverend Paul is dead, and no truth can hurt his feelings any more. But it is true of him that he preached a vulgar gospel, worshipped a vulgar god, and had vulgar notions upon all things which came within the sphere of an intellect not too well instructed. He was always in remarkable earnest, and was very certain that all his beliefs were accurate and that all beliefs running counter to his own were sinful. He was incapable of doing a wilful wrong to anybody. In person he was gaunt and bony, and his general aspect was repellent. Young Joe, resenting most things, resented the Reverend Paul with a vehemence inspired by direct hate. The Reverend Paul, for his part, looked on the young man with a stony severity of holiness which foresaw for him eternal pains and penalties.

Mrs. Bushell, arm-in-arm with the minister, walked homewards, and her husband and her son followed at a little distance. By-and-by came round a corner of the lane, facing this broken quartette, a youngster resplendent in the devices of the latest fashion, switching at the hedges as he walked. The lane was fairly filled with scattered groups of homeward-going worshippers, and all but the new-comer were walking in one direction. He strolled along, a good deal stared at, and pausing suddenly before young Joe, thrust out a gloved hand, and said, 'Good morning' in a loud and cheery voice. The youngster, a little embarrassed, returned his greeting. The old man without pausing turned his head, and in his broadest drawl bade his son be home in time for dinner.

'Who's that?' said the new-comer. He was one of those people who, without knowing it, are audible under ordinary conditions over a circuit of fifty yards.

'My father,' young Joe answered, speaking in tones as loud as the other's, and with an air of injured pride.

'Who's that?' asked old Joe, returning, and joining the young men as they stood before each other.

'Mr. Sydney Cheston,' said young Joe; 'Sir Sydney Cheston's eldest son. My father, Mr. Cheston.'

'How be *you*?' said old Joe, pipe in mouth. He kept his hands in the pockets of his moleskin jacket, and nodded at the baronet's son with perfect naturalness.

'I am very well,' returned Mr. Cheston. 'How be you?'

'I'm as right as a trivet,' old Joe answered, unsuspecting of satire. For a moment he had thought the loud 'Who's that?' a little impudent, but seeing the young man cheerful and self-possessed, forgot to notice it. Young Joe burned to knock Mr. Sydney Cheston down. 'I've heerd Joe talk about you,' said the old man comfortably. 'Come an' have a bit o' dinner along of us. Eh?'

'Very sorry,' the young buck returned, 'I have an engagement.'

'All right,' said the old man, nodding. 'Be in time, Joe. Good mornin,' young mister.'

'Good morning, governor,' said Mr. Cheston with loud cheerfulness. Young Joe raged inwardly. 'Queer old bird, the pater,' the future baronet made comment, in a moderated voice.

'It occurs to me,' young Joe replied, in rapid undertone, 'that I am scarcely a fit repository for your opinions.'

'My dear fellow,' said Mr. Cheston lightly, 'everything must have a beginning. You begin now, and we began a hundred years ago. That's all the difference.'

'Possibly,' said young Joe with great stiffness. His reply was somewhat vague, even to himself; but he felt that he discharged a duty, whilst he relieved the gathered spleen of the whole morning.

'Don't be rusty,' Mr. Cheston answered. 'Anybody's welcome to tell me that *my* governor's a queer old bird. Gad, he is! A very queer old bird. Most men's governors *are* queer old birds. We shall be queer old birds ourselves some day.'

Young Joe, a little mollified and a little in haste to be rid of that sore subject, asked what had brought his friend into the neighbourhood. The out-of-door worshippers were still straggling by, and Cheston, taking Joe's arm, turned with him and struck across a by-path which led through cornfields, where the bright scarlet of thick-growing poppies lent more beauty than value to the crop.

'I'm staying with old Moulding, at the Hollies,' Cheston said; 'and as they all went to church this morning, I ventured on a lonely stroll through the region. I'm glad I did it, for I've seen two things which impressed me vastly.'

'Imprimis?' asked young Joe, trying to catch some little seeming of gaiety, if only for wounded pride's sake.

'Imprimis,' answered Cheston, 'the prettiest face I ever set

eyes on. A Black Country beauty. A rose springing from an artificial Alp of slag and cinder.'

'Oh!' said the other in a meditative way.

'Pleasing spectacle number one,' said Cheston gaily, as though addressing an audience, 'led to pleasing spectacle number two. Number one, dressed in the most becoming and least conventional fashion, was apparently bound for church or chapel, inasmuch as she bore a hymn-book and looked devotional and demure. Having no fear of the proprieties before my eyes, and having a natural delight in the contemplation of beauty, I lit up a cigar and strolled after her. By-and-by we came upon an enormous out-door meeting, where my little beauty met her mother or some other elderly female dragon, and I lost sight of her. But I know where she lives and I am going to have another look at her.'

Young Joe, without seeing any clear grounds for apprehension, spoke with some anxiety, though with outer lightness.

'Who is this charming young person?'

'She dwells,' said Cheston, simulating a melodramatic tone, 'though in what capacity I know not, at the sign of the Saracen's Head, and her divine name is Diana—or Dinah. Yes, it's Dinah. I heard the guardian dragon scold her for being late.'

A blush, partly of anger and partly of embarrassment, was on young Joe's face. He forced a laugh.

'Yes, she's a pretty girl;' then hurriedly, to escape further discussion of the topic, 'And what was pleasing spectacle number two?'

'Pleasing spectacle number two,' said Cheston, with noisy cheerfulness, 'was a sort of she-Boanerges in black silk who harangued the multitude. I protest,' he went on, laughing heartily, 'that she was worth a journey to the North Pole to look at and to listen to. But I dare say you were there and heard her. You were coming back that way. For myself, I walked off to the Saracen's Head and watched my little divinity in again before I turned to walk to the Hollies.'

What with wounded pride, and jealous fear, and his resentful rage at things in general, young Joe was very near to boiling point.

'You know everybody hereabouts,' said Cheston, with obtuse goodhumour and unflagging enjoyment in the sound of his own voice—sweeter music than the spheres could make—'who was the she-Boanerges?'

Young Joe reached boiling-point and bubbled over.

'She was my mother, sir! And in ten minutes you have insulted my father and my mother and have told me how you

dogged my—my sweetheart home, and—and— I tell you what it is, Cheston. You cash that I O U I have of yours at your earliest convenience, and don't trouble yourself to know me any more. Good morning.'

And off went the hapless young fellow in a great heat, with a face like a peony, and with smarting tears in his eyes. Cheston stood a moment, stunned, as though an invisible avalanche had fallen upon him. Then he raced after his late companion and caught him by the shoulder in the act of mounting the first stile.

'My dear fellow,' he said pantingly, 'pray forgive me. I was quite ignorant. I wouldn't have done it for the world. Pray do forgive me. I beg your pardon a hundred thousand times.'

Young Joe swung himself out of the other's grasp and mounted the stile. He melted a little, notwithstanding. He wanted somebody's sympathy and companionship, and Cheston was evidently very sorry. But how could he turn and show the hot tears which were even then finding their channels on his face? The penitent vaulted the stile after him and pursued him with breathless apology, and at last took him by the shoulders and swung him fairly round. At that, in a sudden gust of added shame for the tears with which his eyes were filled, he gave his rage full swing, and launched a blow at the apologist, and stood waving his arms above him demanding wildly to know if the prostrate Cheston wanted any more.

'By Jove I do,' roared the late penitent, and springing to his feet he threw his hat and coat upon the grass and awaited young Joe's onslaught. For a minute the two stood face to face, in posture of defence. Then Cheston dropped his hands. 'It was quite my fault, Bushell,' he said, 'and I won't fight about it. I don't wonder at your striking me. Let us say no more about it. Shake hands, old man, shake hands.'

Thereupon young Joe shamefacedly shook hands, stammered some broken excuses—'temper greatly tried,' and so forth—and went his way.

'He's got hatsful of money,' meditated the future baronet, as young Joe walked miserably away. 'But ain't he paying for having it, poor beggar?—ain't he just, that's all?'

CHAPTER II.

MR. AND MRS. BUSHELL and the Reverend Paul Screed sat at meat together. A pair of fowls and a leg of mutton cooked on the previous day, to avoid the desecration of the Sabbath by needless

labour, decorated the board, whilst hot vegetables made a sort of concession from religious principle to hospitality.

'Shall us wait for Joseph?' the old man asked. Joseph was Joe in non-company hours. The conventional form was a concession to the presence of the Reverend Paul.

'If Joseph can't get home in time for dinner,' said Mrs. Bushell, 'Joseph must go without.'

'Nonsense, missis,' said the old man genially. 'Nobody go's wi'out grub i' this house as long as there is any. But we'll go on wi'out him if you like.'

Grace had already been pronounced by the Reverend Paul, who crumbled his bread in silence during this brief debate, with a demure eye on the leg of mutton. Mrs. Bushell had the head of the table, and set to work business-like on the cold fowls. At that moment young Joe entered, still resentful, and somewhat heated by a hurried walk home. Mrs. Bushell silently carved for him also and set his plate before him. Rather to be doing something to hide the agitation which yet remained with him, than because the food invited him, he took up his knife and fork. The Reverend Paul laid a detaining hand upon his arm, and arose slowly. The three bowed their heads whilst the minister pronounced a second and supplementary 'blessing.' 'For what Mr. Joseph is about to receive may the Lord make him truly thankful.' Young Joe accepted this as a new affront, and his food choked him. He pushed his plate a little away, after making an ineffectual attempt at the cold fowl.

'Joseph,' said his mother with placid severity, 'it is better to serve God than Mammon. I can't break the Sabbath by cooking to satisfy your carnal appetites.'

'I don't want you to cook for me, mother,' said the young fellow, sorely baited by his own feelings. 'The fowl is well enough, but I am not hungry. That is all.'

The mother sighed—and the sigh said plainly, 'I hold my own opinion.' The father set his hand on the young man's shoulder.

'You've been a bit downhearted-like all mornin'. What's the matter, lad? Bain't you well?'

'I am not altogether well, father,' young Joe answered.

Mrs. Bushell's severity vanished, and she looked at her son's flushed face with motherly eyes and instant anxiety and pity.

'You're a bit feverish, Joseph,' she said; 'I can see that. Have a glass o' wine an' lie down.'

'I think I will lie down,' said young Joe, glad to escape,

though conscious of hypocrisy. 'I will lie down a little while if you'll excuse me. No, never mind the wine, mother.'

'Perhaps,' said the Reverend Paul, 'it is the working of the powerful word we heard this morning.'

Mrs. Bushell shook her head, and sighed again. This second sigh said plainly, 'I am a humble vessel.'

'Let us hope so, ma'am,' said the Reverend Paul, at once recognising and waiving Mrs. Bushell's depreciation of herself.

'The lad's well enough,' said old Joe, reaching out his fork and appropriating a slice of cold mutton.

'You're over-careless, Joseph,' said Mrs. Bushell, helping the Reverend Paul. 'You're over-careless yourself, Joseph. I wish Mr. Screed 'ud say a solemn word to him.'

'I will, ma'am,' said the Reverend Paul, with his hand upon the beer-jug.

Nothing of this was spoken in young Joe's hearing. He, cooling himself meanwhile with a cigar in his own room, thought over the events of the morning with self-tormenting accusation. He despised himself for having made allusion to the I O U, and he hated himself for having struck his old school companion and constantly good-humoured friend. And he laid all these things, with whatever other of his own faults and misdoings he could think of, at the parental doors; though, even as he did so, some self-accusing thoughts assailed him.

The Reverend Paul in the mean time meditated on the solemn word he had promised to say to young Joe, and as he thought about it, he grew more and more severe in his judgments upon young Joe's private character and spiritual prospects. It was quite in a mood of prophetic indignation, therefore, that he encountered the object of his reflections. The old man had gone upstairs for his afternoon nap—his custom always—and Mrs. Bushell was asleep in the back parlour, when young Joe came a little stealthily downstairs, and, taking his hat from its peg, went towards the door. The Reverend Paul, also moving stealthily, emerged from the front parlour and approached the young man on tiptoe.

'May I ask a word with you?' he said with ghostly solemnity.

'You may,' young Joe answered. He had smoked himself into a better humour, but he hated the reverend gentleman, as I have said already, and his gorge arose at him.

The minister went on tiptoe back into the parlour, and young Joe like a conspirator followed stealthily. It was the habit of the household to go about in this wise whilst the elder Bushell took his nap.

'Mister Joseph,' said the Reverend Paul, 'your mother has requested me to speak a solemn word to you.'

'About what?' asked young Joe, with his eyes glittering a little wickedly.

'Your soul,' said the Reverend Paul.

'Ah!' said Joe, with a sigh of desperation; 'what about it?'

'It is greatly to be feared,' said the Reverend Paul, 'that you are in a state of impenitence.'

'About what?' asked young Joe again. 'I'm very penitent for some things, and not at all penitent for others.'

'You resist the Spirit,' said the minister in a solemn murmur; 'you neglect the means of grace; you scoff at the way of safety; you live in open profligacy.'

'What?' asked the other. The question was put with startling distinctness, and sounded like a pistol-shot snapping across the subdued grumble of a violoncello.

'I have watched you closely,' said the minister; 'you spent an hour yesterday in a tap-room.'

'I did nothing of the sort,' young Joe declared hotly. 'I passed through a tap-room on my way to play a game at billiards.'

'A profitless and sinful waste of time,' said the Reverend Paul.

'There are some things,' said young Joe, with a fine-gentleman manner, 'which you and I cannot agree upon. I challenge your right to watch me, but every beast acts after his own instinct; and I can't help that. You are my father's guest, Mr. Screed, and I am bound not to quarrel with you. If you take any interest in my spiritual welfare, you will refrain from provoking me to wrath. That is, I believe, the proper phrase. Good afternoon, sir.'

The Reverend Paul Screed's wrath was seasoned by a certain self-repression and a certain sense of authority. He told himself, and he believed it, that he did well to be angry. But, in spite of the fact that he was, according to his lights, a good man, he had a strain of meanness in him. Anger, says the old poet, is a brief madness. It is also a self-revelation, searching as lightning.

Young Joe was on his way to the door, hat in hand. The minister, with one hand on the wall and the other grasping the edge of the door, barred his progress.

'I am not to be debarred, Mister Joseph,' he said, very picked and precise in every syllable, as men only educated late in life are apt to be,—'I am not to be debarred, Mr. Joseph, from doing my duty by any pretended contempt you may assume. It is my business to warn you, and I do it without fear. If my warnings are disregarded by you, I shall carry them elsewhere. I have already

told you that I have watched you closely. I witnessed your parting last night from that unhappy girl whom you are endeavouring to entrap.'

'Eh?' said young Joe, an octave higher than his common speech, and very softly.

'I spoke to her,' said the Reverend Paul, 'and admonished her. And I shall make it my business now, for her soul's safety and yours, to tell your parents and hers what I know about this matter.'

'You will, will you?' said the other in the same soft key.

'I can tell already,' said the Reverend Paul, 'that it will be useless to appeal to any honourable instinct in you. And I have seen enough of the girl whom you have endeavoured to make the victim of your arts and wiles, to know that only constant watching could ensure her safety.'

At that instant three people were tremendously surprised. And I cannot tell who was the most profoundly amazed amongst them. I record the fact. Young Joe struck the Reverend Paul and knocked him headlong into the arms of Bushell senior, at that moment in the act of entering the room. Father and son regarded each other across the semi-prostrate figure of the minister with blank amazement, for young Joe was as wildly astonished at his own deed as even the Reverend Paul himself could be. Yet, having done the deed, he must abide by it.

'Why, what's all this?' demanded the old man sternly.

'This fellow,' said young Joe, scornfully indicating the minister, who held a white handkerchief to his mouth, 'has the insolence to tell me that he has been watching me this long time past. He says he saw me kiss a pretty girl last night, and that he's going to tell her mother and my mother, and have us looked after and taken care of. And he has the audacity to tell me that nothing but close watching can save my—my sweetheart's virtue.'

O disingenuous and cowardly young Joe! It was not too late even then, and one honest word might have saved you, but you would not speak it.

'An' becos a minister o' God's word, as is a old man likewise, speaks a honest word o' warnin' to you, you go an' knock him down! An' you do it in your father's house, of a Sunday!'

'He insulted a lady,' said young Joe, 'for whom I have a great respect and regard. I never meant to strike him. I tried to leave the room, and he stood in the doorway, and wouldn't let me pass. Suppose a man had attacked my mother's reputation before you married her, wouldn't you have knocked him down?'

Old Joe had been a little too handy at knocking people down





'The Reverend Paul was knocked headlong into the arms of Bushell senior.'

in his own youth, on slighter provocation, to feel that he had any great right to be severe about this matter. Yet he felt keenly that an outrage had been committed, and that it must in some way be atoned for. He was angry, but he was puzzled, and, as his readiest refuge from bewilderment, he looked angrier than he was. As for young Joe, he began to feel that he was dangerous and incendiary. He had knocked down two men in one day, and he was now bitterly ashamed of the achievement. One of the men was his closest friend, and the other was elderly and was laid under professional obligations not to fight. But the more ashamed he grew, the more shameful his last misdeed seemed likely to appear in the eyes of others, and the more necessary it became to shroud himself in a sort of cloak of tacit scorn of everybody, and be sulky in as dignified a way as came easily.

The rustle of a silk dress was heard, and Mrs. Bushell stood in the doorway, by her husband's side. At the bare sight of his mother young Joe recognised the hopelessness of any defence, and threw himself upon the sofa.

'What's the matter?' asked Mrs. Bushell.

'Your son,' said the Reverend Paul Screed, removing the handkerchief, 'has answered the solemn word of warning you desired me to address to him by blows.'

'Not blows,' said the culprit from the sofa, hardening himself, 'a blow.'

'I do not know,' said the minister, 'whether I received one blow or more. I am still a little shaken by his violence.'

'Joseph,' said Mrs. Bushell, advancing, 'leave this house, and never come back to it again.'

'Very well,' said the young man, rising. Even at that moment the mother's heart yearned over him, but she must acquit herself of duty first and be tender afterwards. She knew her husband would interfere, and she never dreamed that her only child would leave her, even though she ordered him away.

'Rot an' nonsense!' said the old man angrily. 'If it's anybody's business to order my son out o' my house, it's mine. Fair play's a jewel. Joe's done wrong, but we do' know—' (meaning 'don't know')—the rights o' this business yet. Now, parson, it's your turn. Say thy say.'

Mr. Screed answered nothing, and Mrs. Bushell, still confident in her husband's interference, turned again upon her son.

'Leave the house, Joseph.'

'Very well,' said young Joe again, and passing from the room went upstairs, and began to pack his belongings together. Mean-

while the minister told his story, and from his own point of view told it fairly.

'Mr. Banks,' said Mrs. Bushell, 'ain't a godly person, but I've known Dinah ever since her was a baby, an' her's as good a gell as ever lived, I believe. I've seen as Joe an' her was fond of each other, an' I always thought somethin' ud come of it.'

'Cus it all, passon,' said old Joe in great heat, 'why shouldn't the lad kiss his sweetheart, an' why should yo' goo and black her character to him?'

'I did my duty,' said Mr. Screed with dignity.

'Forgiveness is a Christian duty,' said Mrs. Bushell, alarmed by the sounds which came from above, where young Joe was vigorously cording a box. 'I needn't tell *you* that, sir. But Joseph shall beg your pardon on his bended knees or out of this house he goes.'

'I am willing to accept his apology,' said the Reverend Paul, with a real effort towards charity, which cost him dear.

Mrs. Bushell mounted the stairs and entered her son's bedroom. He was hastily searching the pockets of an old light overcoat, and when his mother entered he threw the garment upon the bed, where it lay with all its pockets turned inside out. Whatever he searched for was not found, for he turned, and, disregarding his mother's presence, took a hasty look through a number of documents—old letters, scraps of newspapers, and what not—in an open drawer, and then, as if putting off the search to a more convenient moment, tumbled the papers loosely together into a portmanteau which he strapped and locked. His mother watched him with a cold demeanour which belied the longing of her heart.

'Joseph!' she said harshly, yearning over him.

'Yes, mother,' said he, looking up for a minute.

'Come downstairs an' beg Mr. Screed's pardon, or out o' this house you go.'

'Beg his pardon for insulting me!' said young Joe bitterly. 'No, thank you, mother. As for leaving the house, I've been ready and willing to do that this many a day. It's been none too happy a home for me, with its parsons and prayer-meetings.'

'Where do you think you're going?' asked Mrs. Bushell severely, wounded by this last allusion. 'A wise son maketh a glad father, but he that is foolish despiseth his mother. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul, but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. You come down and beg Mr. Screed's pardon, or out o' this house you go.'

'Very well, mother,' said young Joe; and Mrs. Bushell, her mission having failed, went downstairs again.

'Joseph,' she said, addressing her husband, 'I can do nothin' with him. Will you speak to him?'

The old man called his son from the foot of the stairs, and Joe came down with a box on his shoulder and a portmanteau in his hand. He set them down outside the parlour door, and stood there sulkily.

'I've heerd this thing through o' one side,' said old Joe, striving to deal honestly with the case. 'What ha' you got to say?'

'I have said all that I have to say,' young Joe answered. 'He was insolent, and I lost my temper. I told him once that he was my father's guest, and that I had no right to quarrel with him. I bade him good afternoon, but he stopped me, and was more insolent than ever.'

'Now, look here, Joseph,' said the old man: 'you ask Mr. Screed's pardon, and tak' them things upstairs again, and be a good lad, and let's hear no more about it.'

'I wouldn't forgive Mr. Screed,' said young Joe, feeling himself to be a very plucky martyr now, 'if he asked my pardon fifty times, and that I should apologise to him is out of the question.'

'Then leave the house,' said Mrs. Bushell, still belying herself and thinking it righteous to do so.

'I can send for these, I suppose?' said young Joe, indicating the chest and the portmanteau. 'Good-bye, father. Good-bye, mother. When next you feel inclined to be insolent, sir, remember the deserved chastisement you once met with at my hands.'

With that final defiance, young Joe was gone. He was very miserable, and very much ashamed; but there was not one of the three who remained behind who did not confess that he had at least a shadow of right on his side. Indeed, the whole of this poor quarrel was conducted by people who were ashamed of their part in it. The Reverend Paul felt that he had gone further with the lad than duty impelled him. The mother repented of her cruel ultimatum, and cried to think she had not used softer means. The father was angry with himself for having allowed young Joe to go. The lad himself, as we have seen already, was heartily ashamed. Of course each member of the quartette would have fought the quarrel through again, rather than admit just then a shade of wrong on his or her own side.

Young Joe could scarcely analyse his sensations at that time. He was very fond of his father and very proud of him, in spite of an education which had done much to weaken all family ties. For his mother he had an affection much less keen. There had never been any sympathy between them, so far as young Joe knew; and although his negative knowledge was necessarily incomplete, it

was a barrier more than sufficient against love's progress. I regret that we shall see but little of that hard old Calvinist, for to one who knew her well she was a woman well worth knowing. She had more affection in her than anybody gave her credit for, and she loved her only child with so passionate a tenderness that she prayed every night and morning that she might not make an 'idol' of him. In this wise she succeeded in disguising her love so perfectly that young Joe had grown up in the belief that his very presence was distasteful to her.

So, with a sore heart and with some burdens of conscience, the young fellow dawdled away from the house in which he was born, resolved never to return to it. The future looked blank enough, for he had no business or profession, and had discovered in himself no special aptitudes which were likely to be profitable to him. He had ten pounds in his pocket, and might be able, perhaps, on his personal possessions of jewelry and what not, to realise fifty. The prospect was altogether dreary, and in spite of his resolve not to return, he was conscious of a very definite longing that his father would run after him and take forcible possession of him by ear or shoulder. He would willingly have gone back—even ignominiously—so that the ignominy had not seemed voluntary. But nobody ran after him; no restraining voice called him; and young Joe went his way to shame and sorrow, as many a thousand worse and better men have gone before him; for the want of one wise courage in himself, or, failing that, one word of friendly resolution from outside him.

There was nothing to invite or encourage him in the blank Sabbath street, where one cur lay in the sunshine snapping at the flies. Young Joe had upon him an impulse to kick the cur, but restrained himself, and went miserably and moodily along. It was counted highly improper and even immoral to smoke in the streets on Sunday in that quarter of the world; but Joe, feeling that he was leaving the town and could afford to despise its edict, lit a cigar and hardened himself. He chose a way which led him across certain mournful meadows, where the grass was poisoned by the exhalations of a chemical factory near at hand, and rambled on through frowsy verdure until he reached a canal. The artificial hills rose high on each side of the cutting, and on one side ran clean into the water, wooded to the very edge. On the other, the towing-path was green except for one little streak. The water was without motion, or the place might have passed for an unusually favourable scrap of English river scenery. The artificial bluffs were bold and precipitous, and they had the merit of hiding the defaced country which lay beyond them. Up and down

the towing-path young Joe wandered with the air of a man who has appointed a rendezvous. He waited for perhaps an hour, when round the corner of the farthest bluff came a figure in fluttering white muslin and a straw hat. His back was turned, and the new-comer, with innocent mirthful mischief in her face, ran tiptoe along the sward, and clapped both hands across his eyes.

'Guess who it is,' said the new-comer blithely.

Young Joe returned no answer. The expression in the girl's face changed. She moved her hands, and saw—what she had only felt before—that they were wet with tears. She threw one arm around his neck, and, seeking his left hand with hers, asked with tender solicitude,

'What is it, Joe, dear? What's the matter?'

Young Joe, facing about, kissed her, and took both her hands in his. The tears still glistened on the lashes over his gloomy eyes, and the girl regarded him with a look of fear and anxiety.

'I have bad news for you, Dinah,' said young Joe at last. 'I am turned out of house and home, and I shall have to go away somewhere and face the world.'

'Turned out of house and home?' questioned Dinah, with brown frightened eyes wide open.

'Turned out of house and home,' young Joe repeated sombrelly. 'But don't be afraid, Dinah. I shall be able to take care of myself and you. I shall cast about for something to do, and I'll work my fingers to the bone rather than see you want anything.'

'Turned away from home?' Dinah again asked. 'Who turned you away?'

Joe related the incidents of the afternoon, with some little natural bias.

'And you see, dear, there's nothing for it but to go away and'—with a bitter little laugh—'and seek my fortune.'

'But, Joe,' said Dinah, 'you hadn't ought to have hit him, and him a middle-aged man. Wouldn't it be better, darling, to go back, and say as you was sorry?'

'Good heaven, Dinah!' said young Joe, 'don't say *hadn't ought*. How can I go back and say I'm sorry? I'm not sorry; and even if I were, I couldn't go back and say so, to have them think I was afraid to face the world.'

Dinah stood grave and thoughtful for a minute, and then said,

'I suppose I mustn't tell father as we're a-going?'

'My darling,' said young Joe, 'you mustn't think of coming with me. Not at first, you know. I must go away and get some-

thing to do, and make a home for you. We can't run away like two babes in the wood, in that fashion. It won't be long, Dinah. Don't cry, my darling, don't cry. We shan't be long apart. I'll take care of that.'

'I don't see any use,' said Dinah, sitting disconsolately on the side of the spoil-bank and wiping her eyes with her little muslin apron—'I don't see any use in being married if a wife can't go along with her husband when he's turned out of house an' home, and hasn't got anywhere to go to. O Joe, you can't leave me behind—you can't be so cruel. No, Joe, no, you couldn't have the heart to leave me.'

Joe sat down beside her on the grass-grown bank and soothed her, feeling himself very guilty all the while. Dinah refused to be comforted, and yet found his proffered comfort pleasant. But by-and-by a certain coquettish little petulance took the place of grief, and young Joe knew that he had half won his cause, which he admitted was a poor one to win.

'Don't tell me, Joe,' said pretty Dinah, 'as your folks are going to drive you away for always—I know better. If you take 'em at their word, and stay away a week, they'll be glad to have you back again.'

Young Joe recognised the truth of this observation, but it played such havoc with the heroics of the case that he resented it and pooh-poohed it with a sombre gloom.

'It isn't very kind of you, Dinah,' said Joe, glad to appear as the injured person of the two, 'to make light of such a serious matter. And I would not lower myself in my own esteem by begging myself back again for anything the world could give me. I couldn't do it, darling, even for your sake. No, I'll work for you, and struggle for you, but I won't do a mean thing, even for you.'

He said 'even for you' so tenderly, and there was such an obvious self-accusation in him when he said it, that the girl threw her arms about his neck and kissed him.

'I know you're noble an' 'igh sperited, my dear,' she said, 'and I shall never say a word to ask you to be nothing else for me. No, not a word, Joe. And I've been a very thankless girl, Joe, to make believe as it was my trouble, when it was yours all the time. Why, dear me! it's no great matter for me to go on livin' at home with my father an' mother, till you can afford to send for me, is it, Joe? No, darlin', I shan't fret no more about myself.'

He read the devotion and the affection in her heart, and had a dim notion that he could not be altogether a bad fellow, since she gave him such unstinted love. It stirred a vague comfort in him

and strengthened him to approve of himself. He bullied his conscience into quiet, therefore, and began to take quite a high tone with it.

'It's perhaps a good thing, after all,' he said. 'A man ought not to be dependent upon anybody. He ought to be able to take care of himself. And I shall go into the world and fight for you, Dinah, and that will help me. And when I have made a place for you——' He smiled in appreciation of the work already done—in fancy.

'Don't mind about its being a very fine place at first, dear,' said Dinah, nestling to him and admiring him with all her heart—his courage, his misfortune, his love.

'Not too fine a place at first,' said Joe, 'but later on a palace of a place.'

He said it lightly, and she laughed at the badinage, but in a moment they were grave again. It was a bitter business, after all. When the time for parting came, Joe strained her to his breast, and she hung about him sobbing.

'Go,' she said, struggling to be brave. 'Go, an' God bless you, my own dear, dear, ever dearest Joe.'

At this courageous sorrow young Joe melted.

'Yes,' he said, 'I *will* go. I'll go home and beg Screed's pardon, and I'll—I'll tell my father that we're married, Dinah, and if he likes to cut up rough about it he can, but I can at least feel then that I've acted like a man, and not like a coward. And if he likes to send me away then, I can work with a clear conscience, and I shall know that I've done my duty.'

Now, women have always been puzzles to me, and I understand very little of them, but I have noticed in them one consistent peculiarity. If you once succeed in awaking in a woman that sense of protecting strength and tenderness which the most helpless of women are capable of feeling over even the most helpful of men, she will protect you, at the cost of serious wounds, from the merest scratch of any little thorn. Dinah would have none of this wholesome and honest sacrifice for her sake.

'No,' she said, fairly yearning over him and worshipping him for this bare promise of bare justice. 'Don't vex him with any talk about me yet, my dear. Why, you know, darling,' she went on, strangling her own hopes with the bowstring her sultan had sent her a month before, 'that if you hadn't known as it 'ud vex him, you'd ha' told him of it long ago. And now you want to tell him when he's vexed a'ready.'

'I don't care,' said Joe, feeling heroic. 'He can't do anything worse than he has done. I'll do the right thing.'

But Dinah clung to him.

'No,' she said. 'You shan't ruin yourself for me, Joe.' And she clung to her point with such vehemence that Joe yielded, and had all the satisfaction of seeming heroic without incurring any danger—a joy which I have myself experienced.

They kissed and embraced again, and Joe wiped her eyes, and promised brokenly to write often.

'You're not a-goin' far away, my darlin', are you?' said Dinah, trying to be brave again.

'No, dear, no,' said he in answer; 'not far.'

'And, Joe, darlin',' she said, after a tearful pause, relieved by many sad kisses, 'will you let me keep my marriage lines?'

She whispered the question at his ear, and he bent over tenderly the while.

'Yes, yes, my dear,' he answered; 'I meant to bring them to you this afternoon, but I was in such a hurry. They are packed up in my portmanteau, but I will send them to you.'

'You don't mind my askin' for 'em, do you, Joe?'

'I was wrong all through,' he said; 'we ought to have been married openly. But I shall do you justice, Dinah. You know that, don't you?'

And so, with protestations, and caresses, and hopes, and with some repentances on his side, they parted. Joe climbed the bank again, and waved adieu from the top. She answered with a motion of the hand, and he was gone.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BUSHELL did what she could to atone to the minister for the terrible insult which had been put upon him by her son. Old Joe sat awhile and smoked in silence, and, being greatly exercised by the whole business, drank rather more whisky and water than was good for him. Finally a streak of light appeared, and he went, a little flushed, towards it. It led him for a while by the road young Joe had taken an hour or two before, but he stopped short of the mangy meadow and sounded a heavy rat-tat at the door of a smart-looking house, which stood a little back from the lane. A neat servant-maid responded to this summons.

'Is Brother George in?' asked the old man.

'Yes, sir,' said the damsel, and led the way into a gaudily furnished parlour, where in black broadcloth sat an intensely respectable man in an arm-chair by the fireplace.

'Joe-ziph,' said the intensely respectable man, dividing the name into two balanced syllables, 'how are you?'

'George,' said old Joe, seating himself, 'I'm in a bit o' trouble.'

'You don't say so, Joe-ziph,' said the respectable man, with a wooden want of interest.

'Yis,' said old Joe, rubbing his grey hair with an enormous palm. 'I'm in a peck o' trouble. My Rebecca has been an' ordered my Joe out o' my house, an' he's took her at a word, an' he's gone.'

'Dear me,' said Brother George, as woodenly as before.

'Yes,' said old Joe again, 'he's took her at a word an' he's gone.'

'What did her order him off for?' asked Brother George.

Old Joe told the story, with rough-hewn brevity, and his brother nodded now and then to signify attention. In point of fact, it interested him more than it seemed to do. He was pretty nearly as wooden as he looked, but he had a very remarkable eye for the main chance. He saw money with an eye at once telescopic and microscopic, and he scented it, or seemed to scent it, as a sleuth-hound scents his game. Joe Bushell had made his money by a remarkably profitable patent, was worth a quarter of a million if a penny, and lived on less than a twentieth part of his income. George had borrowed from his brother to start life as a charter-master, had worked hard and lived hard, and screwed down all under him to the uttermost farthing, and, having made his money chiefly by hard-fistedness, was hated by his workpeople, and knew it, and rather rejoiced in it than otherwise, as being in some sense a tribute to his business capacity. He was a mean and grudging creature, with no instinct of active dishonesty. He had a dull, slow, wooden dislike of young Joe, because young Joe would one day inherit old Joe's fortune. Not that George had ever had a hope of it himself, but he grudged wealth to anybody, and could have nursed a spite against the very walls of a bank's strong-room for holding so much money. And now for the first time in his life dawned upon him some dim fancy, scarcely a hope, that he might handle Brother Joseph's money as his own some day. It was that dim fancy which made old Joe's story interesting to him.

'Now,' said the father, when his narrative was finished, 'what I want thee to do, George, is just this. Thee go an' find Joe, an' fetch him hum. Tek no sort o' denial. He can stop wi' thee a day or two, an' then, when it's blowed over wi' Rebecca, he can come back to me. Dost see?'

'Ah,' said Brother George, 'I see.' And he saw more than he confessed to seeing. He intended no wrong to anybody, but was it likely that young Joe would listen to his solicitations? He

thought not. And if that misguided young man declined to listen, might not his absence become a source of profit to his uncle? 'Where is he?' the uncle asked, after giving these reflections time to form.

'Well, thee seest,' said old Joe, rubbing his head perplexedly, 'we do' rightly know wheer he is. But he's boun' to send for his luggage.'

'Ah,' said Brother George again, '*I* see.'

'I think,' old Joe resumed, 'as he's likely to send for it to-night. Our Joe's allays in a bit of a hurry, an' does everythin' hot-foot.'

'Then,' said George, 'I'd better come up to your place, eh?'

'Just what I wanted,' answered old Joe; and the two set out together. 'Not a word to the missis, mind.' George nodded in reply, turning over in that stiff-jointed mind of his the question—Shall I break or keep *that* promise? Which is likelier to pay? He would not have robbed young Joe—he would not have robbed anybody. Theft was 'agen the law.' But although any plain and straightforward method of transferring a neighbour's coin to his pouch was a thing to be reprehended, the construction of any crooked scheme for that purpose was praiseworthy, and the carriage of the same to triumphant effect was a thing to be proud of. In short, Brother George was a diplomatist, and had some personal advantages in the diplomatic way—singular as that statement may appear. He could lie, for instance, with a stolidity which defied scrutiny. Practice had done much for him, but the first great gift was Nature's. He was 'inscrutable' enough to have realised a Tory journalist's idea of a prime minister. His respectable countenance, clean shaven but for its respectable tufts of grey whisker, was scarcely more mobile than a mask. Since he never lied apart from strict necessity, he was commonly regarded as a veracious man. He is not the scoundrel of this story—which, indeed, scarcely aspires to the portraiture of a real rascal—and nobody who knew him thought of him as being anything but a very respectable self-made man, who did unusual credit to his original station in life. The remarkable woodenness of his manner, and a certain solemn drawl he had, were mainly responsible for the family belief in his wisdom. He was the final authority on family affairs.

The Reverend Paul had left the house when the brothers reached it. Mrs. Bushell was sitting in the kitchen with a big Bible before her, earnestly and believingly struggling after comfort in the utterances of Habakkuk. There are people who find Christian philosophies in Solomon's Song and suck satisfaction out of Ecclesiastes; and Mrs. Bushell was of them. But at this

sorrowful hour, a philippic against the Chaldeans, 'that bitter and hasty nation,' had little power to soothe.

'Brother George,' she said, as that respectable person entered, 'has Joseph been a-asking your advice?'

'Rebecker,' Brother George replied with weighty solemnity, 'far be it from me to deny anythin' as is true. That's what Joe-ziph come to see me for, as far as I can see.'

'Why,' read Mrs. Bushell with her finger tracking the denouncing lines in the great Bible, 'why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous: therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.'

'Well, well, Rebecker,' said Brother George with a propitiatory accent, 'hoys will be boys, you know, an' allays was.'

'They wouldn't *be* boys if they wasn't,' said old Joe, with a touch of the local humour.

'Joseph!' said Mrs. Bushell warningly.

'Becky, my gell!' said old Joe, leaning above her chair and laying a heavy hand upon her shoulder.

She felt the appeal thus conveyed, for she was by nature a woman of much tenderness. But she only straightened herself, and laid her finger once more upon the warning text.

'There's my guide, Joseph,' she made answer, when she could trust her voice, for she was sore disturbed, and her 'worldly longings,' as she called them, moved strongly in her heart.

Old Joe moved away from the back of her chair, and Brother George sat down with an air of wisdom on him, and looked as one who is prepared to proffer counsel. There was silence for a time; then Mrs. Bushell turned her head away and asked,

'What do you advise, Brother George?'

'Well,' said Brother George, venting an elaborate and prolonged wink upon old Joe, 'I should advise as nothing should be done not to say precipitate.'

'Yes,' said old Joe, nodding at his brother, 'give him a day or two, an' he'll come round.'

'Joseph,' said Mrs. Bushell, with unfortunate solemnity, 'if you look for any healin' of this breach apart from his repentance, you will wait in vain. If you mean as I shall come round, you are mistaken. In this case, Joseph, there is duty to be done, an' I've spoke my last word a'ready.'

Joe shook his head at Brother George mournfully, and George shook his head in answer. Matters were growing rather bright for

Brother George, and if the brightness were only nebulous as yet, it might reveal things pleasant to look at by-and-by. Notwithstanding this cheerful inward knowledge, however, George looked upon his brother with a solemn countenance. He would fain have appealed seriously to his sister-in-law's forbearance, and so have drawn from her a more emphatic and forcible denial of her own desires, but he was afraid of that experiment.

'Becky,' said old Joe, being perhaps a little more accessible to emotion at that moment than he commonly was, 'the lad was hard put on. The parson go's an' says things to him about his sweetheart, an' it stands to r'ason as Joe got humped at it. He axed me, Becky, afore you come into the room, what I'd ha' done if any mon had said things to me about yo' afore we got married. It wouldn't ha' made much differ to me, I think,' said old Joe, driving one great hand into the palm of the other, 'w'ho it was as said it. I'd ha' floored him, if he'd ha' killed me the next minute.'

Brother George nodded gloomily in assent to this, for it seemed to him an unanswerable argument in young Joe's favour. But Mrs. Bushell held firm.

'I've spoke my last word, Joseph. He struck a minister o' God's word, in his own father's house, of a Sunday; an' if that ain't worth sayin' "I'm sorry for," I've got no more to say.'

Brother George nodded again in acquiescence, for this view of the case also seemed unanswerable.

'Gi'e the lad time,' urged old Joe.

'Let him tak' his own time, Joseph,' said the mother staunchly. 'When he's tired o' the husks o' the Prodigal, he'll come back again. But I fear he'll sup sorrow by spoonfuls i' the way.'

She left the room, and old Joe, with a troubled face, set tobacco and a glass of whisky before his brother. The pair sat in gloomy silence for a while when a knock came to the door. Old Joe answered this summons.

'Who's theer?' he asked.

'Well,' said a voice from the dark outside, 'as fur as my apinium go's, it's a young feller o' the name o' Bowker.'

'Come in, William,' said old Joe in a shaky voice. 'What be you come for?'

'Why, your son's at the Dudley Arms,' said Mr. Bowker entering the kitchen, 'an' he's sent me up here t' ax for his box. He's a-goo'in' in to Brummagem to-night, he says, an' on to London i' the mornin'.'

'Goo an' say a word to him, George,' said the father. 'Do't let the lad go further 'n Brummagem. Mak' him send word to you

where he is, when he gets there, an' we'll tek care on him. But, George, don't go to let him know as I ain't angry wi' him. Mind that. Do it all as if it was comin' from yourself like. D'ye see ?'

'I see,' said Brother George. Could anything have been designed to play better into the hands of a respectable man who desired to secure an advantage and was afraid of a crime? He would not in this case have even the shadow of a lie upon his conscience. All that was to be done was to tell the truth, and obey instructions—in breaking them. Mrs. Bushell, without an apology, was implacable, and her husband wished to have it supposed that he also was very angry. George knew very well that his nephew would tender no apology just then, and began to look complacently on the promise of the future.

Young Joe sat moody and alone in the smoke-room of the Dudley Arms, awaiting the return of his emissary, when Uncle George entered, and with a solemn aspect took a seat before him.

'This is a bad job, Joe-ziph,' said he, shaking his head. 'I've heerd all about it from your mother and father. I don't say as you was in the wrong, not to say altogether, but you know as it was a dreadful thing to do—a dreadful thing. But look thee here, my lad,' he continued, with a wooden assumption of geniality which went, howsoever unreal it might be, clean to the lad's sore heart, 'blood's thicker than water, an' when all's said an' done you're my newew and I'm your uncle. Now, what d'ye mean to do? They'm hard on you at home, fearful hard.'

'I shall go out and face the world,' said young Joe. 'I'm not afraid !'

'Of course you ain't, a fine-built young fellow like you! It ain't likely as you would be. But look here, my lad—you can't face the world on nothing. Can you, now?'

'I have something to begin with,' said Joe in answer. 'I am not altogether without money. And then, I have a little owing to me.'

'Ah, dear me. Well. I can see as you're just as hot-foot as your father and mother! But, come now, where do you think o' goin' to!'

'I'd go to America,' said young Joe, 'if I only had the chance.'

'Merriky?' echoed Uncle George. 'It's a long way there.'

'The longer the better,' said Joe bitterly.

'No, no, Joseph,' said Uncle George. 'Don't say that. But

if you're bent on it, why, I——. No, no, Joseph, don't think on it.'

'Yes,' said Joe, 'I'll do it. I'll do it if I work my passage out. There's room for a man to move in, in America.'

'Don't you talk nonsense,' said Uncle George.

'By Jove!' quoth young Joe, rising, and feeling already the glow of a successful explorer, 'I'll show you whether or not I'm talking nonsense. I tell you, sir, I'll do it, and I will.'

'Pooh!' said Uncle George; 'you ain't going to work your passage out. Not while you've got a uncle as can put his hand in his pocket to help you. No, no, Joseph.'

'You're very kind, uncle,' said Joe, 'but I can't accept any help from you.' And he wondered 'why did I never see what a good fellow Uncle George is until now?'

'Wait here a bit,' said the benevolent uncle, and with that arose, and left the room with stagey stealth. When he returned, he bore with him a sheet of letter-paper and an inkstand. He sat down in silence, and wrote in a slow and laboured manner. Then he produced a pocket-book, from which, after an intricate search, he drew a crumpled receipt-stamp. Gazing hard at Joe, he moistened this with his tongue, affixed it to the paper, and then, squaring his elbows, he set his head down sideways to the table, and laboriously signed the document. Joe watched him, not knowing what all this might mean, until the sheet, carefully dried before the fire, was placed in his own hands. He read it with a swift moistening of the eyes, less at the gift than at the kindness which dictated it.

'Thank you, uncle,' said young Joe. 'God bless you for your goodness. You are the only friend I have.'

'If they knewed,' said his only friend truthfully, 'as I'd helped you i' this way, they'd never forgive me. But wherever you goo, Joseph, remember as you've got a friend in me. Allays write to me, my lad; allays write to me.'

Therewith the benevolent uncle squeezed his nephew's hand and left him. Young Joe sat with his elbows on the table, and looked with new-born affection and gratitude after him. Why had he never understood Uncle George until now?

'A dear good fellow!' he said aloud in his enthusiasm; 'a most kindly, generous fellow!'

And with tears of gratitude hot in his eyes, he folded up his uncle's cheque for a hundred pounds.

(To be continued.)

Does Writing Pay?

THE CONFESSIONS OF AN AUTHOR.

I.

FOR more than twenty years I have been an industrious *littérateur*—I may add, of all-work—labouring in all the departments. At the same time, this work has not been what is called ‘hard,’ such as that of a barrister in good practice, but of a rapid concentrated kind. The result is that I have succeeded in earning by my brains a sum that I fancy may surprise my readers, though I delay naming it until I have communicated my little experiences. These, I hope, will be a useful contribution to the question as to whether writing is a profitable profession. Perhaps I had better say at once, by way of piquing and inflaming my readers with a noble competition, that these profits are not far from fifteen thousand pounds—a very respectable sum. For the greater portion of the time I have kept a sort of Fee-Book, so that it is no speculative appraisalment. During half the period alluded to I followed the profession of the Bar; and it may be said that this word ‘following’ is well chosen, for it entailed daily attendance for a number of hours: and if the profession did not follow me as well as I followed it, it brought in certain returns, and engrossed a large share of my attention. Yet I contrived gaily and with a light heart to woo and win the more engaging sister, who eventually rewarded in me the way described. Fifteen thousand pounds is fair return for the off-hand, rattling, and somewhat careless attention bestowed.

Yet I am not in the first rank—nor in the second—I might modestly put myself in the third; though some might reasonably dispute with me even this unassuming place. What have I done? what is my ‘literary baggage’? is naturally the next question. An ingenious Dryasdust took the trouble not long since to ascertain the real author, or find who was the recipient, of some letters of a well-known personage. This he discovered by following out certain allusions in the text, hunting through newspapers of the day—arriving by an almost exhaustive process at its solution. It was a surprise to one who fancied he was wrapped up close in his anonymous ulster, defiant of recognition. I run, therefore, the same risk of detection if I confess that this same ‘baggage’ consists of great biographical chests—‘heavy, perhaps

massive'; light serial portmanteaux, or novels and tales, three-, two-and one-, volume; hat-boxes, bags, Gladstone 'collapsing,' and some collapsed, in the form of volumes of essays, short stories, disquisitions, criticisms, &c. I have written plays that have succeeded and plays that have failed, and have been paid sufficiently in both categories. I have been a dramatic critic. I have attended a music-hall opening, and an exhibition of fans, as 'our own reporter.' I have contributed to an advertising paper which was left gratuitously at all doors,—and which dealt with its contributors on the same principle. I have gone specially to the Continent for one of the leading journals, a daily paper, and I have written for almost every magazine that has been born, died, or exists. I have written on painting, music, buildings, decorative art, dress, the classics, history, travels, my own life, the lives of other people, dancing, &c. In short, like Swift and his broomstick, I could write decently and respectably on any subject 'briefed' to me.

It will be said, however, that this confession is, as it were, *hors concours*, and of no value as a contribution to the question, as a person with these Crichton-like gifts and this general versatility gains money as a matter of course. Not at all. It is the gaining of money that has brought me or stimulated these gifts, rather than the gifts have brought the money. This may seem paradoxical, but if I might liken myself to so great and successful a personage, it is exactly akin to the progress of the great Mr. William Whiteley—who added to his departments, now a grocery, now a butchery, now coals, &c., according as the demand on him came. My wares I would not, of course, pretend to be of the same quality as his, be they excellent or the reverse; but the analogy holds. I did all these things and do them still, though we all now feel, like other *entrepreneurs*, the pressure of the times.

The stock-in-trade for all this is, of course, first a general taste for literature, and a familiarity with all the blind alleys, 'wynds,' crannies, and passages, which are invaluable in furnishing subjects for essays. This is all amusing reading to the person with the proper taste, and you can go on for ever emptying the stuff out of the old clumsy demijohn into nice modern flasks. There are innumerable forgotten personages and episodes which can be treated, and become new and interesting in the treatment. This is all acquired. So, too, is style—that ready, lively, and superficial style—though it takes a long time. But I had better begin at the beginning, and tell 'from the egg' how I became a writer.

This style, then, with a certain dramatic way of putting things so as to present a picture without the formal lines of a picture,

and one which shall interest, I unconsciously secured very early and with little trouble. On leaving a great school for which I had an extraordinary affection, and where I had spent some happy and even romantic days, I fell into the habit of trying to reproduce them in writing, recalling the pleasant scenes in as vivid a way as I could. As this was often done, and earnestly done, and with all sincerity, the same scene being described and redescribed as often as the humour seized me, there came to be a certain rude power and vividness in description which I recognise now when turning over the innumerable volumes with their crowded pages and minute writing. (What eyes one had then !) Even now the figures move, the lights glitter, the pleasant fragrance of the past exhales. Anyone who saw this huge mass of MS., and the mass of description, characters, dialogues, and incidents therein contained, would admit that here was an advantage in the way of training of no inconsiderable kind. Presently, of course, came the early contribution to the local paper, and the delight of seeing it in the local paper's type ; the only form of recognition, too, known to the local paper. All writers agree in the special and unique sweetness of this apparition ; and, indeed, I have heard writers of great mark, hackneyed at their work, confess that to the last the arrival of a proof-sheet and the sight of one's own thoughts in virgin array of type never cloyed, and produced a peculiar emotion of pleasure. I confess I always feel this charm ; I love the peculiar smell—some would use a worse word—of a printing-office. So far, there was no advance. All the world has written in private records and in local papers, to say nothing of the privately (and expensively) printed volume of poems. But in my case, as indeed in most other cases, it is the first difficult step that costs, and that makes or mars. Just as in mastering skating evolutions ; until you have fearlessly thrown yourself on the outside edge, nothing can be done or ever will be done. I recollect sending to the amiable and worthy Leitch Ritchie, for 'Chambers' Journal,' the first serious contribution—a little story which accidentally had merits for success ; it was legible, short, and dramatic. I have no doubt, too, some accident determined its reception, akin to the turn of a card ; it might have been tossed aside or returned with thanks. A grave letter of approval was returned, and two pounds ten.

I fear that often nowadays the advantage of having his contributions read for approval is lost to the beginner, as the packets sent in are so overwhelming in their number. Two or three other papers were accepted—I could have poured them in or out as by machinery ; but then began checks—not for cash, but 'unsuit-

able,' 'no space,' 'so much in type'—which conveyed the first lesson in writing profitably, that you must not merely not put all your eggs in one basket, but must have about as many baskets as eggs. What will not suit one will suit another; what there is not room for in one there will be room for in another; as a man with many daughters offers his fairest to a man of means and position, and gives his ugliest with money to a man of good will though obscure. So I now cast about for new channels, and tried and tried till I was heartsick and angry, meeting for my investment in paper and postage-stamps, certainly, large returns. I very soon saw that this system would not do, and that one might go on posting contributions for the term of one's natural life without result, save the restoration of the composition—about as disagreeable as the news of its loss. A total reversal of this policy, and a brilliant *coup* in quite a new direction was rewarded with success, and set me on the road to fortune.

II.

THERE was at this time a well-known *littérateur*, a critic and writer of authority and Johnsonian prestige, who was engaged upon a most important work, the very materials for which had cost him, I believe, very large sums of money. I was at the time much interested in him and his subject; and as I lived in the city where his hero had flourished, I set to work to collect matter that would be useful to him. In particular, I nearly blinded myself in deciphering some 'marginalia,' as they are called, in some huge folios preserved in an old library, made neat water-colour sketches of localities, collected traditions, and, in short, made myself exceedingly useful, and earned his grateful acknowledgment. That was the beginning of a long friendship. At that time the no less amiable than gifted Dickens was flourishing in the height of his popularity, and directing his 'Household Words' with great success. To be a writer in that journal, and associated with so great a master, was in itself an enormous advantage, which writers in other periodicals were devoid of. I ventured to presume on the grateful feelings of my new friend in this useful direction. Previously I had, indeed, essayed an entrance to the Wellington Street Paradise, but had been firmly but courteously repulsed by that Peri at the gate, the late Mr. W. H. Wills, who returned rejected contributions with a lithographed circular in which the contributors were assured that their efforts had been read and weighed, as was the custom of the office. This may have been a good-natured exaggeration for reading an extract or

glancing at the whole ; but the daily post brought pounds of such matters which no staff could have grappled with. It was long, however, a tradition of the place how my patron strode in one morning, and, laying down the document, required that it should 'be seen to at once ; set up in type, and dealt with.' He was a man not to be trifled with. Within a fortnight it appeared. It was a not undramatic tale, in the vein of Mr. Wilkie Collins, then in high fashion. I had been again lucky in the subject and treatment ; it was short and telling. I was asked at once to supply something of the kind for the Christmas Number. On that hint I set to work, and from that moment to the present have never ceased to work for that pleasant journal, my connection with which, under the *régime* of father and son, has always been agreeable and satisfactory. The word 'satisfactory' recalls me to the point of this paper, for it represents many thousand pounds, as the ledgers of 'Household Words' and 'All the Year Round' can tell.

The moral, also, is, that other agency besides literary merit is essential in earning money ; there must be knowledge of men and things. I do not believe in the assiduous showering-in of papers. One might ply this method for a whole life, with, of course, the chance that a stray paper on some timely and seasonable subject might arrest the editor's eye and gain adoption. There must be some contrived personal relation between the contracting parties, otherwise there is no more interest in you than in the MS. itself. You are one of many bundles of MS., always an object of repulsion, to be put aside or held over as long as possible, like the poor patients at a doctor's. Hence the indifferent chance of the tribe of governesses, clergymen's wives and daughters, clerks and others, who write from provincial towns, who are made sick all the year round with deferred hope, and whose productions, 'declined with thanks,' are sent back as a sort of favour. Hence, too, some courageous fellows who have come to London to push their way personally, like Johnson and others, have shown more wisdom and policy than they have obtained credit for. I have known not a few to succeed, not by their literary merit, which was indifferent, but by the art of making themselves useful and necessary, and of doing some little job, which a bare chance threw in their way, in a style that they made specially satisfactory. In short, friends and connections is the basis.

Once established at 'Household Words,' I found that the mere connection with that journal was a passport to other magazines. For the first year my returns were, I think, some fourteen to fifteen pounds. The next year they rose to sixty or seventy ; the next, the amount grew into hundreds. As to the paper itself, I

saw that what was required was originality of subject, something fresh and taking. I gave great thought to the selection of what would be desirable. This is really in itself an art, and one of the highest importance; for if it be found that you are sending in what is unsuitable, your credit sinks, and your—at last—really suitable article may share the fate of others. Where, too, the contributor is to be depended on, his paper often goes unread to the printers to be ‘set up.’ Nothing used to be pleasanter than the visit to the office to ‘settle subjects’ with the editor.

But to show how pleasant profit and pleasure may be combined in this most agreeable of all professions, I will note one ‘department’ which I have exploited systematically to my own great enjoyment, and I hope to the satisfaction of others concerned. I have travelled a great deal, *but never at my own cost: rather, to exceeding profit.* I will give some special instances. I spent a week in Holland, and wrote twelve papers on the country for a journal, for which I received forty pounds—the net profit being thirty. I went specially to Rome at an interesting period, wrote observations on men and manners in a series of twenty papers, for which I received sixty pounds. They were published in a volume for which I received seventy—leaving a net profit, after expenses, of eighty pounds. I have never made an expedition to France, Belgium, Ireland, anywhere, without turning it into cash. Nay, I have never been anywhere or seen anything important without making it take this agreeable shape of profit. During the French war, when the Germans were advancing on Paris, I was eager to put this favourite principle in action. But special writers and correspondents were abundant, and everyone was well supplied; so the chance of seeing anything as a commissioned writer was desperate. However, a friendly editor in conversation was excited by the prospect of a vivid sketch of the unhappy city on the eve of a siege, and offered to ‘stand’ all railway expenses to the scene of action, as well as the usual charge for an article. I look back to that hurried and dramatic expedition with infinite pleasure. There is something flattering to the *amour-propre* in being thus despatched at the cost of others. Another hurried expedition of the kind not only forms a delightful recollection, but illustrates what I said of the necessity of a certain judgment and nice sense of what is ‘the psychological moment’ for success in writing. If any ordinary writer of position were to offer himself as special correspondent to any of the greater daily journals, his services would, to a certainty, be declined, on the ground that their own staff was sufficient. Yet on one occasion I was lucky enough to enter the charmed circle, simply owing to a happy combination and

prompt seizure of the 'psychological moment.' It was a few days after Christmas-day, in the year of the suppression of the gaming-houses in Germany. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to record the dying struggle of these institutions. I wondered, would there be any chronicle thereof in the great papers? I resolved to address two leading ones with the suggestion of the subject. One took no notice; from the other came a hurried despatch acceding to the idea, and fixing an almost midnight interview. The thought even now gives me pleasure. There was no time to be lost. I started, travelling all night, telegraphed from the scene a regular 'correspondent' despatch, hurried back, got to town that night, and sat down to write a couple of 'cols.' which appeared next morning—the whole accomplished within sixty to seventy hours. I received a most handsome *honoraire* for what was only a pleasure trip.

III.

BUT now came the idea of a larger and more profitable extension—the novel—which the success of Miss Braddon may be said to have opened up for the inferior and average writer. Fifteen or twenty years ago, the various topics of character and incident—the wicked woman of 'sensation,' the hulking muscular man of unbridled passions, and the female with steel eyes, cold heart, and yellow hair—were novelties, and people loved to hear as much as possible about them, and from any description of writer. These are now all hackneyed and 'used up.' The delineation of characters of the 'Jane Eyre' model was in fashion. Good prices were paid, and it was actually stated that, through the system of the libraries, and owing to the voracious greed of readers, any story in three volumes, by any writer, was certain to 'do,'—to return even some meagre remuneration to its writer. Thus inspired, I determined to set my skiff afloat on the already crowded stream. A friend who was directing a magazine that enjoyed a gasping asthmatic sort of existence, furnished an opening, and allowed me to 'run' this first immature effort through his pages. The remuneration was fixed at, I think, five-and-twenty or thirty pounds. The production was issued in two volumes by a firm which, awkwardly enough, was at the moment in the agonies of death, and the child perished with the mother that brought it forth. But the late Mr. Bentley, to whom it was sent as a specimen of the author's powers, here interposed with an act which seems to belong to the romance of publishing, and, with an intrepidity now unfamiliar to the Row, said, 'Write me a novel

in three volumes as good, and I will give you one hundred and fifty pounds.' Trumpet-tongued words indeed, which I fear neither Smith nor Jones nor clergyman's daughter are ever likely to hear again. I complied with a jocund alacrity. First, the work went through my friendly editor's journal, by which some thirty pounds adhered to it; then it came forth from Burlington Street with a fictitious name attached to it. It was a success, and passed through two editions. With these credentials I applied to my editor of Wellington Street; he, having read my successful venture, gave me an order for a story, at what seemed the munificent remuneration of FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS!—this, too, without having seen a line of the story, and with the further handsome treatment of accepting merely a few chapters in hand as a sufficient instalment with which to start. But, indeed, to the records of the generosity and confidence of the 'chief,' as we would call him, there was no end. Nothing, too, was more delightful than his hearty relish and appreciation of anything to be approved—though the chief merit of most of these productions was that they were ingeniously successful imitations of his own manner. All that laboured—if it can be called labour—under such auspices, 'G. A. S.,' Yates, Moy Thomas, Halliday (defunct now), Dutton Cook, Hollingshead, and myself (most industrious of all, and perhaps making his bow oftenest), can or could tell the same story. For this journal I have written no fewer than seven novels, which collectively have brought me in close upon two thousand pounds; and I have altogether written some fifteen stories, each contrived 'a double debt to pay,' and each of which has first passed through the periodical press, before appearance in its orthodox coat of three or two volumes. The total receipts from this source have been about three thousand pounds. Many of the stories have gone through two editions, one through four, and several enjoy a steady annual sale—their titles being familiar enough at the railway book-stalls.

This, however, would have been but a poor result spread over so many years. So the next golden or profitable rule of the system soon suggested itself, viz., while you kept the literary fire all ablaze and crackling, to have a number of irons heating in it. And I not only had a number of irons—I once drove three novels abreast—but a number of fires. Whether, as the wit said, your writings should go where your irons are, is another important question, and might dispense with discussion of the matter at all. But this 'versatility' not only furnishes relief, but, as a source of profit, is invaluable. I accordingly very soon had broken new ground with my literary 'pick,' and started writing the lives of important

personages, neglected unaccountably till I took them in hand. I am ashamed when I think of the free-and-easy mode in which I selected these great men for resurrection purposes; but I am bound to own that there was some art and nice judgment in the choice. One—the most successful of the series—was suggested by the publisher, taken in hand that night, and completed—‘polished off,’ the irreverent would say—in three months. It was disposed of—they were always respectable, portly, square-looking things, two vols. octavo—to the tune of eight hundred copies at thirty shillings. In this department I wrote much; for four of such monuments I received seven hundred pounds; most of them, however, having also paid the double debt before alluded to. Again, another stroke of the pick, and I became ‘an editor’ of works,—a laborious and unprofitable duty. I ‘edited’ two masters of English literature, but great favourites of mine, for twenty pounds apiece. They filled nine large volumes.

The ‘double debt to pay’ principle is an admirable one, but requires art to carry out. A great difficulty, as it might seem at first sight, would be the disposal in this wise of the innumerable short tales which the diligent writer turns out, much as the diligent painter does his pot-boilers. These I used to collect in the old palmy days in volumes. But publishers will have nothing to do with such miscellanies now. Still I was not daunted, and, after issuing a volume, I ventured on the familiar device of collecting a number of persons on a journey and making them tell stories. Even now, I am not *au bout*, and have another and more original device on my banner, namely, writing each short story in such a way that it shall be complete and yet form part of a whole—like the shield platform formed by Rienzi’s soldiers in the late representation of the opera. Each is carefully written in the same character, and forms an episode in his experience. Thus the casual reader is gratified while I am equally so.

These various productions fill from sixty to seventy volumes of the official form; while the scattered papers, if brought together, would raise the tale to nearly one hundred. The material with which the literary baggage is packed is gathered from the sources I before mentioned, namely, ‘curious’ reading in all directions: but the chief supply is drawn from myself. It is not too much to say that every incident of my life, such as it is—feelings, thoughts, loves, sights, characters—has been pressed in to do duty, more or less coloured and treated, but giving a genuineness and vitality which always quickened the pace of the pen. I wrote an account of my old favourite school-days for Mr. Dickens, with which he was much pleased; these figured duly in several numbers of

his journal at a return of some twenty pounds; and, with some additions, reappeared as a little volume which enjoyed much popularity, and ran through three editions in a few months. For this, however, I only received twenty pounds more: but then we did not anticipate this success. I may be pardoned for adding that the journal 'written for gentlemen' declared that it was superior to the popular 'Tom Brown.' Still, the outlay in time and composition was far below the sum received, as it amounted to little more than that employed in writing letters to friends, or one's journal.

Mr. James Payn lately started an interesting discussion as to the springs from which the novelist was to draw the water—whence gather his story, characters, &c. The discussion also gave some ingenious suggestions as to story, &c. My belief is, that no one can *devise* a character: all my own, such as they are, have been hints from real life. But I would say that there was great art in this process; a literal copy is worthless and has small effect. In my own case, the personages would not recognise themselves. I have seen instances where the very speeches and actions of certain eccentric persons have been literally set down—without humorous results. The art consists in abstracting the peculiar phenomena of manner of speech, and devising situations which would call them out far more effectively. You see vividly that personage in the situation, and, by a sort of inspiration, it supplies new language and actions corresponding. It was thus that Mr. Dickens 'worked out' Mrs. Gamp, whose oddities had no real existence, though he had seen something analogous in the hospital nurse. With me, having got my character, the character was certain to supply the story; which is only following the precedent of real life, where strange characters really bring about strange events. This would take too long to elaborate. I have one favourite heroine that figures in six or seven of these stories—drawn from one favourite person. In the last of these I drew her career as I intended it, and my own as I intended it, bringing the two characters together at the close, as is done in all novels; and a few months later the same result followed in the case of the living personages.

As to publishers, here is the result of my experience. From the nobility of the Row—with one exception—came invariably the most hungry, meagre, and shabby offers. The two most eminent, perhaps, have invariably preferred that arrangement of 'sharing,' or 'half-profits,' which consists in tending the author the shells, while the firm in question swallows the oyster. 'Fraudulent' might seem a harsh word for such arrangements, but anything

analogous—if presented to a court of law—would probably be so stigmatised. I have had two transactions of the ‘sharing’ kind, and these in early salad days; the first was with an eminent firm who had taken two of my works; one a novel for which they had given a large price, the other a big biographical work on ‘sharing’ terms. The latter seemed to be going off briskly, and a member of the firm informed me once, rubbing his hands pleasantly, that ‘there was money for me at the office.’ Not wishing to display a mean greed, I did not, as I ought to have done, repair at once to the office for the money, but let the matter stand over. Meanwhile, the firm discovered later that the novel had not been going so briskly. They took fright, and when the account of the biography came in, the ‘money at the office’ had disappeared; and, strange to say, there was a loss. By an arrangement, however, connected with the copies on hand, I succeeded in extracting forty pounds. Authors should never forget the testimony given in court as to the liberality of an eminent firm whom I have heard styled ‘the Mæcenas of authors,’ who presented an unfortunate mad clergyman with a five-pound note for his substantial biography of a bishop. I have heard of an eminent firm disposing of 1,200 copies of a bulky work, and bringing in the author their debtor by five or ten pounds. The other personal transaction of the kind was with the worthy publisher of Catherine Street, an old friend and encourager, who honestly and faithfully divided the profits, and on a not very successful work handed me some eighty pounds as my share. I may add, that with this excellent man—and we have had innumerable transactions—I have never had a scrap of writing in the shape of an agreement. His word and my word were sufficient. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that a publisher is entitled to charge you all things as they would be charged to a non-publisher. Owing to his position and responsibilities, he obtains with his printing, paper, and advertisements, discounts and other advantages.

All through this life nothing disagreeable has occurred to me and no unhandsome treatment has been encountered, save in perhaps two or three instances. I have always met with the most scrupulous honesty in settlements; and only in the case of one or two obscure journals have I been ‘done.’ I have met with but one instance of ungenerous behaviour from ‘brethren of the craft,’ and this was not long ago.

As a curious bizarre instance of pleasant profit indirectly arising from this ‘periodical’ writing, and of somewhat skilful exploitation, I must record the following. For one of the great weekly illustrated papers, enjoying a circulation of, I believe,

300,000 copies, and going over all the world (what an advertisement for a writer's name!) I had contributed a short Christmas story. This, as usual, was a transcript of personal feeling, written under the shadow of painful events. It turned on some brilliant, dazzling ball at which a man, after some great sorrow, was looking on, listening to one of those rapturous and dramatic waltzes, alternations of sadness and wild hilarity, which Waldteufel and other composers of his school have the art of writing. In these strains he seems to catch hints and snatches of his own life. It becomes like a wild dream. In the process, the waltz itself is described dramatically with all its fitful turns; in short, it was a little feat of word-painting. The story itself was entitled 'The Last Valse.' After an interval, letters began to reach the editor asking—where was this most significant waltz, to which a gentleman had been listening, to be obtained? Another letter followed from an eminent publisher, saying that, if such were in existence, he would be happy to bring it out: what terms would be asked? Being of a musical turn, and having dabbled a good deal in amateur 'composition,' as such is by courtesy styled, I set to work, and, with some professional aid, and a taking air which a member of my own family furnished, a set of waltzes was constructed. The result was what I may proudly call the 'well-known and familiar 'Geliebt und Verloren,' 'Loved and Lost' Waltzes, played everywhere, on bands military, orchestral, and 'German,' by organs and hurdy-gurdies, made into songs and 'facile arrangements'; in short, the valse of its day. At the last computation, 60,000 copies had been disposed of; and the copyright in the unexhausted and future sale was lately disposed of, I believe, for a sum of two hundred pounds. I had a fair share in some of this good fortune in the price of the next waltz, but not, of course, in proportion. Was not this an agreeable result from a short newspaper story—as flattering, too, as it was agreeable? For the story itself I received the sum of forty pounds. It was but a few columns long. I well remember the pleasure the commission gave me. It was to be done under pressure, as the time was short and presses were waiting. Things are written far better under such circumstances; there is more inspiration and 'go.' From the various illustrated journals and magazines a woodcut often arrives, representing a young lady at a fancy ball, two children on a ghostly staircase, or something of the kind, with a request that I would illustrate *them*, instead of their illustrating *me*, by a story. This often taxes one's ingenuity sorely, as it will not do merely to bring in the scene in question, but it must be made of the essence of the story. This, however, is what is called 'knack.'

Thus omnivorous, it may be assumed that the stage was not likely to be overlooked. As a lesson in perseverance, it deserves to be noted that I was fifteen years struggling to find entrance to that carefully walled-up preserve. Once, after years of effort, I succeeded in getting a piece accepted, but the manager collapsed, as it is called, and I had to begin again. For my first farce I obtained ten pounds; for my second, twenty; and for my grand drama, in which I had worked with a partner, one hundred pounds. I hope, however, to do considerably more in this direction.

Two guineas, I should say, would comprise all my receipts in the direction of verse-making. Distinctly, I fear much is not to be done in this direction. Yet I console myself with the thought that many who have published volumes of poems have not made even this small sum.

In addition to this pleasant and profitable life, there are many incidental advantages. Your moderately successful author is often asked, as I am, to sit for his photograph for some 'series,' and is of course never charged for it. In nine cases out of ten, an application to any of the London managers secures you a gratuitous stall. For years I have been a constant playgoer on these easy terms. So that now, when on a rare occasion I have to pay for a stall, it seems to border on a cruel imposition, as though the money had been taken from me unfairly. Such is the force of habit.

A great mistake in the diplomacy of authors is to be too grasping. Men cannot resist a present advantage in hand, and so sacrifice what is in the bush. One work of mine—a truly monstrous one for its carelessness—failed utterly—the only one that met such a fate. I was to have sixty pounds; the publisher was in despair and disgusted, but I held his signed agreement. I nobly forbore, and tore my bond. But mark; when that was long forgotten, I repaid to him with another work. He was good enough to say that I had behaved so handsomely, that he was ready to treat on satisfactory terms for the new work. So, I did not lose on the whole: nor did he.

Publishers do not relish being 'bested.' As to 'corrections' I could tell a curious thing. I am the author of a work in two volumes, numbering in all over a thousand pages, the corrections for which cost about as much as the original setting up in type! The sums were, I think, one hundred and forty and one hundred and fifty pounds. Yet the generous publisher, before paying what he had covenanted to pay, said he thought it right to put it to me whether this style of 'correcting' was not excessive. He good-

naturedly mulcted me only forty pounds, as my legitimate share of the cost.

As for my essays, sketches, descriptions, they are simply innumerable. It is agreeable work, and so lightly done. You covet something, or are extravagant to the tune of five pounds. You sit down for a morning (having found a subject in your last walk), and the debt is paid. Indeed, during these walks, it is wonderful how agreeably profit for mind and purse can be made. Being ever of an artistic turn, I began, some time ago, to work out, as I walked along, principles of criticism as applied to the buildings, houses, &c., in the streets, and soon elaborated a pleasant series. Extending this idea, I began to think how many unnoticed curious things there were in the London streets, old houses, doorways, &c.; and this I am now working out in a more elaborate series still. All this and more goes on with the greater labours, and used to represent with me from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds a year,—now not nearly so much. I put the sums from this source at about four thousand pounds. Adding all up, I should fix my total earnings at about fourteen thousand pounds, of which I retain, alas! but fifteen hundred duly and securely invested.

On these results, can writing be called a crutch or a walking-stick? It must be remembered, however, that I really used it as the walking-stick, having originally a small income of my own, and for the last ten years a large one.

‘Rigged with [Curses Dark.]’

She can o’ercast the night and cloud the moon,
And mak’ the deils obedient to her crune.—*Gentle Shepherd.*

ON a cold October afternoon many years ago, two women were sitting in a cottage which looked on the small harbour of St. Aidan’s. One, a remarkably pretty but pale and delicate-looking girl of eighteen, was gazing intently on the sea; the other, her aged grandmother, was spinning, or rather was sitting by her spinning-wheel, but she was doing no work, and it was easy to see that the minds of both were so full of some one subject of absorbing interest that everything else was as nothing to it. Within the house all was dull; without it all was cheerless to the last degree of cheerlessness. An east wind was making itself felt, as it so frequently does in the north, by wiping out all colour from the landscape. The sky was leaden, the sea inky, every trace of green was expunged from leaf and shrub and herbage, and in its place the eye rested only on dull and dirty sandy-greys. The wind was blowing briskly, and driving before it along the surface of the road long swirling wreaths of dust, or making them dance over the bare tracts of ground where the life of all vegetation had long ago been stamped out by the children of St. Aidan’s, who made their nursery out-of-doors. St. Aidan’s was not a large place. Two or three rows of red-brick, red-tiled houses were huddled together on the side of the steep hills which closed in the bay and harbour. These houses were for the most part occupied by a patient and much-enduring race of fishermen, but during the herring season they were crowded by other fishermen, who came from almost every sea-port from John O’Groat’s house to the Land’s End, to struggle to possess themselves of some portion of this harvest of the sea. A fine and cheerful sight it often was to see the boats sail in with their silvery loads, and then to watch the bustle of unloading and packing. But to-day no boats were there—nor was there any sign of life or movement anywhere. How dreary the sea looked! For miles and miles there was no other motion on its surface than an unbroken series of harsh wrinkles. The girl inside the cottage was looking fixedly at this, with eyes smarting and heavy with much weeping. Her heart, too, was as heavy as lead. It is doubtful whether the sternness and harshness of all she saw outside added to the pain which she was

already feeling. It may have done so, for she sighed and shivered, and, for the first time for two hours and more, turned her eyes into the room where she was sitting. If during this time she had ever thought of her grandmother at all, she had believed her to be entirely occupied with her spinning—she had never missed the sound of the wheel—now, when she turned away from the pitiless sea to seek a respite from its tormenting power, her eyes met those of the old woman fixed on her with a gaze so earnest that they seemed to be trying to look down to the very bottom of her heart, in search of an answer to the question they were most unmistakably putting. The girl had not known that the old woman was looking at her, or she would not have fled from the sight of the sea to encounter one more distressful still. Now she could not take her eyes away from those which were watching her so narrowly. They fascinated her by their imploring eagerness; they held her by their intensity. They were putting a question which would shortly be put plainly in words, and when that time came, Phoebe well knew that her grandmother would not stir from the place where she was until she got an answer, even if she had to wait for it for hours. By a great effort, she detached her eyes from her grandmother's, to the extent of escaping from their direct gaze. She looked at the face, so puckered with age, with the veins so prominent and the strange spots of purply-violet colour so often seen in the faces of old people. Her grandmother's aspect was strong and commanding, her eye hawk-like, her mouth, nose, and chin were all handsome and well formed, her hair was white as snow. She wore a large frilled cap tied down by a broad black ribbon, a neat shepherd's plaid shawl over her shoulders, a scanty brown merino dress and a spotlessly clean apron. But she looked so severe—so unloving! and last week she had never spoken to the anxious girl who was watching her, without calling her 'my bonnie birdie,' or 'my sweet lamb;' and last week, if she had been idle herself, or had seen Phoebe idle, she would have thought, 'The Lord had a good right to take and clash the roof of her cottage in with one of His big thunderbolts, just for a punishment for such laziness!' and now she had been sitting for more than an hour doing nothing but watch Phoebe looking out of the window, and Phoebe herself had been doing that for two hours, undisturbed by one word of reproof.

The grandmother still kept silence. The strain on the girl became too great, and at last she looked in the old woman's face with a helpless entreaty for pity.

'Well, girl?' said the grandmother sternly.

'Nay, there's no well about it!' said Phoebe, beginning to cry.

'Now, dinnot thou waste no time in foolishness!' cried the grandmother. 'Let me know, once for all, does that man mean to wed thee, or not? just answer that.'

Sobs and tears came faster and faster. 'He—tellt me he would—he always tellt me so; he promised me—he did indeed.'

'And he knows what he has brought thee to?'

Phoebe bent her head.

'Hanging thy head down is no answer! Hast thou tellt him thou's—?'

'I've tellt him ivverything! I setten ivverything afore him,' interrupted Phoebe in desperation; she could not bear to hear her shame put in words.

'Well?' again inquired the grandmother.

The girl was silent, but she was quivering in every nerve.

The old woman paid no regard to the agony Phoebe was manifestly enduring. She was determined at any cost to have a direct answer, and that at once, and continued, 'He mak's a doubt about marrying of thee, then?'

'No, he doesn't!' cried Phoebe eagerly. 'He mak's no doubt at all! He will marry me, I know he will!'

'When thy bairn has comed to disgrace thee! When thou is nothing but a mock and a bye-word to ivverybody! When thou hast killed thy poor auld grandmother that has reared thee, and always held her head high, and never had none as wasn't decent folks belonging to her till now, when she's going to be shamed for ivver and ivver by thee and thy wanton bad goings-on! Thou thinks he will marry thee then, but I tell thee he won't!'

Phoebe's head drooped lower and lower—she, too, had her fears!

'It's now, or nivver!' repeated the grey-haired woman.

'It's nivver, then!' said Phoebe, 'for he's going away o' Thursday—the fishing's done.'

'He's going away! Going away, and leaving thee here to bring scorn on a woman who thowt to lie her head low knowing none could say no ill of her and her family! Thou's the first lass among us all that has misconductkit hersel'. Thou's the first as has had a love-child to work for and rear, and when the day comes that there's a bairn running about here, and I have to see it and hold my tongue wi' trouble and confusion when folks asks who owns it—I'll be fit to toss mysel' ovver t' cliff—I will indeed! Woman and girl, I have lived here at St. Aidan's seventy-nine year, and nivver a woman-body as could call me kin has ivver had a bairn without having a man to take the shame off her! Thou may sigh and work on wi' wringing thy hands as thou likes, but it's true! Thou may cry thy eyes out, but thou'll not undo what's

done! Thou's brought my good name and thy own down to the very ground; shame on thee, say I! Where is thou going?'

Phoebe turned back. She had got up and was on her way to the door, possibly with some half-formed desire to hide away this sin and disgrace from human ken beneath the water, for as yet no one in St. Aidan's knew of it but her grandmother.

'Dost thou know where Dav—nay, I'll none say his name—where that deevil is?'

Phoebe could not speak.—She pointed with her hand to a bit of rising ground by the sea where her cruel lover and a coastguardsman were standing, minutely scanning the signs of the weather.

'I cannot see, girl. But he's there, is he, the base deceiving wretch! Well, if I have to die for it, I'll mak' a trial for to get nigh hand him to speak to him.' And she, who for years had not done more than cross the floor, and that too only by the aid of crutches, got up, tried to straighten her feeble rheumatic legs, and laid hold of her crutches.

'Grandmother! honey, thou munnot go! Thou'll fall! Thou'll kill thyself! Thou'll nivver get so far!'

The old woman vouchsafed no answer—she struggled slowly across the room towards the door. She was pitiaibly lame and infirm, and it was sad to see the effort this cost her.

'Besides, there's a man with him!' cried Phoebe; 'thou'd surely nivver begin speaking about sike a thing as that afore another man?'

'Whisht at once, Phoebe!' cried the grandmother. 'Thou's the one to blame if there's disgrace in't, and not me!' She opened the low door and let in the cold east wind.

'But, grandmother, it's a long step to where he is, and he is coming to-night for to say good-bye to me. Just for ten minutes, when the clock has gone six.' Phoebe was driven to confess this, rather than see her grandmother go to confront her lover in the presence of a stranger.

'Where is he coming to?'

'To the gate down by the end of our back garden. I'll fetch him in for to speak to you if you like.'

'He shall nivver enter my doors till he has wed thee! And I'll nivver enter his when he has done it! "I'll fetch him in," ye say, girl! ye talk as lightly when ye do begin to talk as if all this was just nought, and sham' had nivver come nigh-hand us! To-night I'll force mysel' for to put one question to him. I'll ask him whether he means to mak' an honest woman on thee or not, but I'll do that outside the house—he shall not cross my door-step!'

'Thou'll let me speak to him first and say what I can tiv him

afore thou begins?' said Phœbe, in much dread of her grandmother's methods of persuasion.

'Ay, mak' what thou can of him afore I come near him, and if I haven't to come at all, I'se be all the better pleased.'

Again there was a long silence, but this time, instead of looking at the sea, Phœbe's eyes watched the clock. Alas! with little enough of hope in them. At six, she folded her shawl round her and stole out; and when once she was beyond the garden, she saw her lover standing waiting for her near the gate. The old woman had allowed her just one short half-hour to plead once more the cause which was to settle the fate of her whole life. In half an hour, by the clock her grandmother was now watching, the old woman would herself come out and confront the man whom she spoke and thought of as '*that deevil*!'

How terribly fast the time went! In what seemed not more than five minutes, Phœbe heard the sharp click of the latch as her grandmother opened the house-door—heard, too, the scrambling shuffle of her feet, as she laboured down the cinder-covered garden-path.

'What's that?' cried Davie Trevethoe, the lover, who could not see over the high wall.

'It's my poor grandmother,' replied Phœbe faintly. 'She's coming out to speak to thee. She says she must see thee about this, hersel'.'

'See me hersel'! Nay, I'll none see her! What for should I see her, to have her tongue to listen to? Tell her she's wrong about me—that I mean to wed thee, but that I cannot possibly do it just yet, for I am not prepared for such a thing.'

'Why not, honey?' asked poor Phœbe, though she had already heard all that he had to say.

'I must have something laid by first. I must have a boat that's all my own—you keep saying I have one, but you don't take into account how many folks have a share in her. I must have more time altogether to turn myself round about in and see what I can do for the best. She wants me to put off going home and wed thee now, but I have been here a month longer than I ought to have been already—I can't stop here now. Tell her that I can't manage that nohow, but I'll come back here with the boats next year, and then, if only we have luck with the fishing, things will be different.'

'Oh honey, don't let us wait; just think what lies afore me, and do let us chance it.'

'Chance it, and ruin everything!' said he.

A great lump rose in Phœbe's throat,—all hope was gone—all

prospect of escaping disgrace faded away into a possibility of something being perhaps done next year, or some year sometime, when the fishing season happened to be more than usually prosperous.

The grandmother came nearer and nearer; off darted David Trevethoe.

'Stop, honey, oh, do stop!' cried Phoebe imploringly.

'Not I!' cried he, and disappeared.

'Phoebe, Phoebe, bairn!' cried the grandmother in a voice full of anguish.

Even then, in the very midst of her own grief and torment, Phoebe could not but feel for the distress and pain of the poor afflicted old woman, whose legs had refused to bear her farther, and who was now standing within a very few steps of the garden gate. She put her arm round her and helped her carefully back into the house.

'He has had his one chance and he has not taken it!' cried Elsie Macdougall angrily, when she was informed what David's decision was, and all the way as they went Phoebe heard her solemn and angry voice uttering bitter lamentations and reproaches; but not to save her life could she have said one word in answer, until at last, with infinite difficulty, she got her in and placed her once more on her own chair, safe inside her own walls.

'Say nought more to me to-night,' cried Phoebe then. 'I's fairly brussen-hearted!' and she threw herself down in the corner by the fire, and covered her face with her apron.

'I'll not say more to thee, my poor bairn,' said the grandmother, with returning love and pity.

'He says he'll wed me afterwards, when more time is by-past,' pleaded Phoebe.

'There'll not be much more time for him!' muttered the old woman; and whether Phoebe heard what she said or not, she neither seemed to know nor care. They went to bed together: neither of them knew whether the other slept or not, for not another word was spoken between them, and no token of sympathy exchanged.

Early next day the old woman said, 'Phoebe, I lay thee on thy obedience not to cross our door-step till that man has left this place! Promise at once—promise solemn.'

Phoebe promised solemnly—she dared not do otherwise, and the old woman relied on her given word. This was Tuesday, and on Thursday David Trevethoe's boat, together with one or two other Penzance boats which had stayed to the very end of the St. Aidan's season, were to sail, and would be seen in that harbour no more until the next year's fishing brought them again northward.

The day passed in silence. Occasionally Phœbe dropped into a seat, and looked as if she were going to sit and think over her sorrows; but whenever she did this, her grandmother said, 'Phœbe, I mun ha' t' wark gone on with;' and Phœbe did go on with her work, until at last night came, and it was a welcome relief to creep into her bed in the darkness, and be able to fret as she liked.

Wednesday passed in the same way, but the old woman's face was hard-set, and somewhat terrible from the stern resolution it displayed. Again Phœbe had to work, and if she stopped a moment, her grandmother said severely, 'Girl, just please to mind what thou's doing,' and during these days she neither allowed her to leave the house, nor to speak to anyone who happened to come in. Few were they who did come in, and to these the old woman said promptly and sternly, 'Honey, we have no time to spend in talking the-day; our Phœbe and me are both particular throng!' and on this hint they went their way, for Elsie Macdougall was not one to be trifled with.

Thursday was the day on which Davie Trevethoe was to sail, and down below in the harbour there was the usual little stir inseparable from a departure of this kind. Once or twice, unhappy Phœbe looked furtively out of the window, hoping to catch a glimpse of the man whom, in spite of everything, she could not help loving so passionately. The aged woman's eyes followed her with extraordinary sharpness and vigilance, and more than once she peremptorily exclaimed, 'Girl! I'll have none o' that looking out of t' winder.' So Phœbe could only cross the kitchen more frequently than was necessary, and hope for a glimpse of her Davie as she went to and fro. But she never saw him!

Noon came, and she and Elsie dined, though little enough was eaten by either. Then Phœbe 'washed up,' and 'sided all the things,' and 'scrubbed down' the table and 'cindered up' the hearth; but she knew that the tide was rising higher and higher, and that in an hour or two her Davie's boat must sail. She saw it gradually become buoyant. She saw it begin to rock on the heaving water.

She fixed eyes full of intense misery on her grandmother, but her grandmother was pitiless, and for all answer bade her 'go on with her work.'

'Poor thing! I dare say she means it kindly,' thought the unhappy girl, 'but she is fairly killing of me.'

Presently the old woman said, 'Girl, reach down the wash-tub from the shelf.'

'She's surely not going for to set me on to wash!' thought Phœbe, for now she was expecting to be ordered to get to her spinning-rock, and she meant to sit somewhere near the window.

'I am tired, grandmother,' she said; 'don't set me on to any more hard work now.'

'It's not that,' replied the grandmother; 'it's not for any washing. Set the tub here afore me on the floor, and fill it edge-full with clean water fra the well, and din not thou stop to look about thee while thou's getting it. Them boats can very well sail away without having thou for to watch them.'

But while filling the pail at the door, Phœbe saw the villagers crowding to the harbour; and while filling her pail for the third time, she saw Davie, her own cruel lover, standing on the quay giving his orders, taking in loaves and other provisions for the voyage, and looking far too busy to have any thought of her. She saw the rich brown sails rise heavily, flapping to and fro until they were fairly set.

This quite overcame the poor girl, and she almost dropped as she carried in the water and emptied it into the washing-tub. At last her great suffering gave her strength to say to her grandmother, 'Have some human natur' in ye. Let me just tak' one last look at him when he is going away so far and so long. Dear knows when he'll come back again!'

'Dear knows, indeed!' muttered the old woman, as she bent down over the large oval washing-tub, which was standing on the ground in front of her, filled nearly to the brim with water. Then she looked up and saw that Phœbe was profiting by her silence, and had approached the window, where she was doing her very utmost to get 'one good look more.'

'Bolt the door again, girl,' said the grandmother, 'and keep all the neighbours out: I want none of them in here now; and then when thou's done that, thou canst sit down, and if thou wants any last looks, why I advise thee just to take them whilst thou can! But leave me alone, I beg of thee, for I want sore to be quiet.'

This suited Phœbe's wishes perfectly—with all her poor tired heart she too was longing to be quiet. She dropped into the window-seat and forgot her grandmother, and forgot everything, except that Davie Trevethoe was now in his boat in the harbour, and on the very point of sailing away from her. The harbour was full of water—the flag flying on the top of the lighthouse, the bar must therefore be covered. Every child, every useless, straggling child in the place had found its way to the pier—every woman in the town was standing giving her baby its death of cold while waiting there to see the boats take their departure; and Phœbe, the one who more than all others longed to be there, had to bide

within stone walls! She never thought of her grandmother or of her own fear of her—never once.

At three the tide was high, a light breeze was blowing, and she knew the time had come for Davie's boat to go. Presently she saw its pretty sea-bitten sails catch the wind and slowly fill, and then it sped on its way. Ah, how wide that sea was—how pathless and how terrible! How much might happen before she touched hand of his again! She bent her head lower and lower, and watched the sail dipping and the boat growing smaller and smaller as it glided over a smooth grey sea into a world hidden by white mist. Thus she sat watching all that long and lonely afternoon. Not once did she turn; and at length, after weeping quietly to herself for an hour or so, her forehead dropped down on the window-sill, where stood her once loved and tenderly-cherished geraniums and roses, and the weary girl slept.

Meanwhile, the old woman was still sitting by the large tub which her grand-daughter had filled for her. She had more than once glanced at Phoebe, and had seen how entirely absorbed she was with what was going on outside, and then she herself had set herself with all her soul, might, and strength, to accomplish the purpose on which her mind was bent. 'That man—that *deevil*, Davie Trevethoe, should never reach his home!'

Many a time she had heard from her own old grandmother, and from another very aged inhabitant of St. Aidan's, of the power which lies in strong will; how any one who knows the old rhymes—runes was what they called them—and had strength to go on repeating these for hour after hour, though head and heart might fail with fear and fatigue, would in the end most certainly prevail. Her grandmother had been a 'wise woman'—not a sailor in the place had ever dared to cross her will. She knew what words to say and what arts to use to summon storm and tempest; and those who offended her knew that, though they might leave port with fair winds blowing and a bright sun shining overhead, she could, if she chose, pray down a gale which would wreck them. Elsie Macdougall, Phoebe's grandmother, well knew the rhymes her grandmother was said to have used, and now, in her urgent need, she was resolved to employ them. She was sitting on a low wooden chair, her elbows were resting on her knees, her head was resting on her hands. She settled herself firmly in her place, and fixed her now baleful blue-grey eyes resolutely on the water which Phoebe had just carried in for her. And thus she sat, quite silent and still; but the wish of her heart was busy and strong—her enemy should not live! She might have sat thus for half-an-hour when her lips began to move. No words, not even a

whisper, passed those lips, but nevertheless they framed words. Quickly those words came, quickly and continuously, and then there was another change, and again she ceased to speak, but whether she spoke or was silent, her eyes never once strayed away from the surface of the water. Sometimes she made passes over it with her lean and bony hands, on which the great purple veins stood up swollen and knotted, or she bent forward and seemed to clasp the mass of water in her embrace, while speaking strange words in hushed whispers or low excited murmurs, and all the time she watched and peered, and darted inquiring glances at the glassy smooth water. After a long long time—was it a ray from the dying sun outside?—had she shaken the tub and made the water quiver? or were her muttered rhymes and her heartily-prayed prayers being heard?—a faint white light on the surface caught her eye—was it really the water heaving slightly under her upraised hands? She saw it. Old as her eyes were, they caught the wished-for sight—her breath came quick and fast—she fixed her eyes more firmly than ever on the water—her thoughts on what she was doing. She bent nearer and nearer—she prayed as she had not prayed for years, and faster and faster came the words of the old rhyme which had been stored up unused in her memory since the earliest days of childhood—a rhyme handed down for centuries from witch mother to witch daughter, in the cold far north, where her fore-elders' ships went to and fro. Again she fancied that the sluggish water—the water, so hard of hearing—stirred, and this time it seemed to her that it moved more thoroughly—that it was not so much a sparkle as a regular upheaval of the entire body. She had no doubt this time! Assuredly she had seen it moving, and she laughed a silent laugh, and prayed a stronger prayer! She bared her wrinkled arms and again stretched them over it, nor did she once pause to take rest. Darkness was falling fast; Elsie still sat there. She could not see anything in the room; to her aged eyes—to any eyes—the window itself was now a mere opaque blur. She did not require light for the work which she had in hand. She never once relaxed her purpose. She was convinced that she had seen the water move in obedience to her will, and not till it over-leapt the barrier which confined it and dashed over its edge before her eyes would she be satisfied, for then she would know that a fierce storm would be raging on the wide waste of waves over which that 'false deevil Davie' was now making his way. She had seen the water sparkle with the first faint impulse of movement—she had afterwards seen it rise and fall. So she told herself, and so she believed; then darkness had come. Darkness might come—her hopes were strong;

she felt absolutely confident that if daylight would but return for a minute or two she would now see mimic waves swelling higher and higher until their tiny heads tossed themselves in tiny white crests, and it would not be one wave only that she would see, but wave succeeding wave at measured intervals, each rising and falling and rising again, but always more and more angrily. She gloated over the thought, and repeated her rhyme still more fiercely, and though the darkness was now complete, her gaze was more intense than ever. She was weary and faint with fatigue, but it was only the dull thing called body which felt fatigue: her spirit was brighter and stronger and more resolute than ever: and so she sat, until suddenly an angry gust of wind dashed against door and window, rattled their fastenings noisily, and shrilly passed away. Then she let her hands fall on her knees, and then she cried aloud, 'The Lord's name be blessed and praised for ever and for evermore!'¹

She looked up. All was dark; but when she tottered to the window, she saw a faint fragment of a moon over which the clouds were driving fast. Again she heard the wind as it swept round her frail cottage in menacing and wrathful gusts. The wind was rising outside, and in the window-seat sat the poor girl whom she loved better than any one living—the daughter of her own dearly loved lost daughter. She was sleeping with her head lying against the window-sill. Elsie could not see her, but she put out her hand and felt her warm soft throat and hair. 'Sleep away, my honey,' said she kindly, 'sleep while thou art able. I'm feared the wind will not let thee sleep long.'

The girl did sleep, and the old woman left her and went and sat down by the embers of her fire, listening to the howling of the wind, and wondering what news she should hear when morning came. At last, worn out by fatigue and excitement, she herself fell into a sound sleep.

About five in the morning she awoke, chilled to the very bone. She was sitting by her burnt-out fire, cold and desolate. It was still dark, and she did not know how to find a light.

'Phoebe, my bairn, where art thou?' cried she.

No answer was returned.

'She has crept her ways into bed and is lying there lost in a heavy sleep, poor thing,' thought Elsie, remembering all that the unhappy girl had gone through. 'She's asleep, and once asleep she'll stay asleep, and so she may for me, poor lass; I'll none waken her to trouble.'

¹ The superstition which forms the subject of this story prevailed in certain parts of Scotland, even within the memory of man.

So she sat where she was for some time longer, until the cold made her teeth chatter and bones ache. 'If only I could see to find my crutches,' thought she, 'I'd make for bed mysel'. I'm fit to perish with cold sitting here!'

She felt for the steel and flint. She felt for the old shoe in which she kept her tinder. She did her best to strike a light, but her hands failed her, the sparks glanced aside, and she was forced to give up the attempt and to sit where she was a while longer.

At last day broke; but though she saw her crutches near her, she felt too numb to trust herself to them. There was no gale now. It was a bright autumn morning, and when she saw how bright it was, her eyes turned to the bed to look for Phœbe.

The bed was empty. She rubbed her eyes, but Phœbe was not there, and when she saw this a terrible thought came into her mind, and straightway she rose to her feet and walked across the room without her crutches—a thing she had not done for five years.

She tried to call Phœbe—her voice refused to form an articulate sound. She opened the house-door and looked out. All was fair and calm and bright. The sun was glittering over the bank of a cloud from which it had risen; the sea, whose face was as clear and open as that of a child, seemed to be smiling an answer to the sun's caress, but the base of the cliff was veiled with a tender mist of driven spray, and on the shore lay a broad belt of lashing sea-weeds, heaped up and driven inwards far above high-water mark by the force of the gale of the night. While Elsie was looking at this, two fishermen came towards her—they were on their way to her house. Their faces were full of rough pity, their eyes grave and kind, and their voices low.

'You maybe do not know about it, mistress?' said one of them doubtfully.

'Have ye comed here for to tell me that I have lost my bairn?' said the old woman, to whom knowledge of the truth seemed to be thus suddenly and strangely given.

'She might happen to come round, but they're all sadly afeard she won't,' replied the other.

'She's lying at Atkinson's, by the shore. They went there with her for readiness, when they got her out.'

'Got her out! What's comed to her? Is she drowned? My Phœbe! My own bonnie bairn!'

'You tell her—tell her kind,' said one of the men to the other.

'No, tell me any way, but tell me quick! I nivver till a few minutes back knew any different than that she was lying safe in

bed there, inside the house. I nivver went to bed mysel', I dropped asleep by the fire.'

'Ye slept last night!' cried both the men, astonished. 'Ye could sleep? There was that wind at our end of the town, that I was afeard it would ding our chimbley down, I was, indeed, and there was dirty weather out at sea. I saw your Phœbe when she first cam' out, though somehow or other I lost her after. We were all hurrying down to the harbour for to render what assistance we could, when all in the wild of the night, down ran a figure by us, and at first go off I reely thowt it was a spectre, but it was your bonnie Phœbe, poor lass! "And what's the guns all firing for so terrible, Mr. Duncan?" she said, said she to me, "and what can all them lights be about?" I think mysel' she mun just ha' said that because she was so terrible anxious-like, for she was tied to know why all that was being done, her a girl born and bred by the sea; so I said, said I, "Honey, it's a boat—a fishing-boat has been drove ashore, and is lying there a wreck," and with that she set up a great shout, and afore and ivver I could tell her not to be so frightened-like, for the sea had gone down a bit and Douglas's big boat had put out to try if aught could be done, she ran off to the harbour, hardly able for to steady hersel' in the wind. So I ran after her as quick as I could, and cried, "Honey, it's none o' the St. Aidan's lads as is in that boat. It's one o' them Penzance boats, David Trevethoe owns it."

"I knowed it was. I felt it was from the very beginning," cried she, quite despairing, and with that she ran the faster, and then I knowed as how I had done wrong, for of a suddenty I remembered that she and him had kept company together the year afore, and that my missis had once or twice tellt me that she believed they were lovers still.'

'Ay, ay,' cried Elsie impatiently; 'but go on; nivver mind that: just tell me what she did.'

'Poor lass! she stood by the pier holding on agin the wind, and wet to the skin she mun ha' been, for whole water was coming down all the time, and when Douglas's boat cam' back she ran along for to meet it, and when she heard that Davie and all aboard with him had been drowned, she ran past ivverybody, and threw hersel' into the water.'

'But they got her out again, you said?' cried Elsie.

'Ay, but they were long about it; God only knows how it will be with her. Ye'll go to her?'

'Ay, at once!' cried Elsie; 'but how?'

They placed her in an arm-chair and carried her quickly to a cottage just above the beach. A crowd was already collected by

the door. Way was made for Elsie, and she was at once carried to the room where poor Phœbe was lying. At the entrance a woman met them who shook her head and said, 'Better not here.'

'My bairn is dead!' cried Elsie; 'let me see her at once.'

No one made any further opposition. On a large table in the centre of the room lay two dead bodies. David Trevethoe and Phoebe were lying side by side. For a long time the old woman stood supporting herself by the edge of the table, and looking at the girl whom she had brought up from childhood. At last she turned to the sailors who had carried her there and said, 'Them two was sweethearts; I did not like the notion of her going right away from me who had been like a mother to her, to wed a stranger down south. I nivver favoured the marriage and nivver let this young man come within my doors. I kept her in the house for three days afore he left. She fret sore about his going away, poor bairn. She cried hersel' to sleep when he sailed, but she mun ha' heard the guns firing and have jealoused it was him that was in danger. That made her run out in the night. Poor thing, she has put herself away in her trouble at lossing him!—the Lord above us all forgive her for what she has done!'

Then she stooped and gave the girl whom she loved so much a long farewell kiss, and then, after a struggle unseen by all, she looked at David Trevethoe. There he lay, cold, still, and with all his busy schemes for bettering his own fortune brought to this abrupt and terrible conclusion. 'Poor young man,' said she, 'it was early for him to die!'

'It was so!' said a bystander; 'and maybe he would have been alive now if he hadn't took fright at the weather and put back here! It's not one boat in twenty as could have run in safe, in such a wind. He never should have tried it; he knew what a set the boats always has to come in here, when it's anyways rough.'

'Maybe, whatever he had done, it would just have turned out the same,' said the aged woman. 'I mun go. Take me home.'

They lifted her into the chair again and carried her home as they had brought her, and as she went she said to herself, while her heart ached with a pain which, as long as she lived, would never leave her, 'My bonnie bairn Phœbe, bad as it is to have thee lying dead and cold there, it's better nor having thee living on to be pointed at with scorn! Now none will ever know the shame that has comed on us, for I hid my thoughts and gave them a wrong turn, and I said, "Poor young man!" Ay, ay, "poor young man" was what my lips said, but my heart was calling him a *deevil*!'

Monaco and Monte Carlo.

I AM naturally, I think, an idyllic sort of person, and the other day, at Hyères,¹ I was able to indulge my idyllic tastes to the top of my bent. I like to pose as a sort of modern Thyrsis or Melibæus, to lie beside my Phyllis under a spreading orange-tree, and to sport with Amaryllis in the shade, or with the tangles of Neæra's hair. Still, it is well to see life from every point of view: and therefore, to-day I am going to be anything but idyllic, to come down from my pastoral perch, and to mingle with the busy throngs of men in the little gambling capital of Monaco, with its beautiful adjunct of Monte Carlo. If I take you into bad company for once, perhaps you will kindly forgive me the one error of an otherwise blameless life, in consideration of my previous good conduct.

Between the palm-lined Boulevards of Nice—that sunny Brighton of the Mediterranean—and the grand amphitheatre of mountains which hem in Mentone with a perfect semicircle of jagged peaks, a single rugged buttress runs out to seaward, and ends in the bluff rocky headland of the Tête-de-Chien. No road has ever succeeded in turning the foot of that precipitous promontory, and even the railway to Genoa has been forced to undermine it by the mean subterfuge of a tunnel. The Corniche route runs along a ledge high up its side, past the massive Roman ruin of Turbia, and overlooks from a height of fifteen hundred feet the town of Monaco and the Casino of Monte Carlo. This mountain bulwark of the Turbia long formed the boundary-line between ancient Gaul and Liguria, between modern France and Italy. On the very summit of the pass, where the narrow Roman road wound along the steep path now widened into the magnificent highway of the Corniche, Augustus built a solid square monument to mark the limit between the Province and the Italian soil, and doubtless also to overawe the wild Alpine mountaineers. A round mediæval tower, likewise in ruins, at present crowns the Roman work. From the ancient name of Trophæa, the trophies of the great Emperor's victory, the modern village of Turbia derives its title. A colossal statue of Augustus himself once stood upon the huge

¹ See 'Wintering at Hyères,' in *Belgravia* for March, 1880.

pedestal of masonry and gazed benignly upon the two countries which his policy united firmly together in the lasting 'Roman peace.'

Just on the Italian side of this dividing ridge, and separated completely from France by the cliffs of the Tête-de-Chien, the tiny principality of Monaco preserved during the middle ages and down to our own times a precarious independence. Never on earth was there such a funny, compact, self-contained little country as this miniature Mediterranean state. Martial talks of a rural property which a single crow could darken by flying over it; and though this is hardly the literal truth about the principality of Monaco, I can assure you that I have seen the whole commonwealth obscured at one swoop by the shadow of a passing cloud. In its palmiest days, about the year 1830, under that distinguished sovereign Honoré V., the principality extended the whole distance from Monaco to Mentone, a space of at least six miles as the crow flies, while its utmost depth from front to back might have been calculated at a mile and a quarter. It consisted, in fact, of a small seaward valley or ledge, the little strip of undercliff between the Tête-de-Chien and the headland of la Murtola—an undercliff far less extensive than that which runs beneath the downs in our own Isle of Wight from Ventnor to Blackgang. Over such a Tom Thumb of a kingdom did Honoré V. rule with a rod of iron. That was the Augustan age, however, of the Monegasque monarchy. In 1848, when revolutions were in fashion, the two outlying villages of Mentone and Rocca-bruna, comprising the larger half of the principality, got up a little revolution on their own account, and published a Declaration of Independence, so that the new Prince Florestan was compelled to content himself with the parish of Monaco alone for all his realm. Thus the modern domains are confined to a still tinier strip, two miles by three-quarters, consisting of the narrow lowland at the foot of the Tête-de-Chien itself.

The capital city of Monaco, the metropolis of this pocket principality, is a town of some twelve hundred people, picturesquely perched on the rounded summit of a very remarkable little rocky peninsula. Figure to yourself a huge petrified whale, his back rising a couple of hundred feet above the water's edge, his head turned toward the sea, and his tail just touching the mainland; and you have a rough picture of the rock of Monaco. It is, in fact, an isolated hillock, jutting into the Mediterranean at the foot of the Maritime Alps, and united to the undercliff only by a narrow isthmus at the foot of the rock, overhung by the mediæval bastions of the Prince's palace. As you look down upon it from

the heights of the Corniche, I have no hesitation in saying that it forms the most picturesque site in Europe. On every side save seaward, huge barriers of mountain hem it in; while toward the smiling blue sea itself, the great rock runs outward, bathed round by tiny white breakers except where the low isthmus links it to the shore; and you can see down with a bird's-eye view into every street and courtyard of the clean little capital. The red-tiled houses, the white palace with its gardens and quadrangles, the bastions of the old wall, the steep road which mounts the rock from the modern railway station, all lie spread out before one like a pictorial map, painted in the bright blue of Mediterranean seas, the dazzling white of Mediterranean sunshine, and the brilliant russet of Mediterranean roofs. One cannot but remember those beautiful lines in Tennyson's 'Daisy,' describing this same Corniche drive—

What Roman strength Turbia showed
In ruin, by the mountain road:
How like a gem the sea-girt city
Of little Monaco basking glowed.

To the left of the town, however, on a small jutting headland of the undercliff, there stands at the present day another element in this bird's-eye view which the Laureate could not have seen when he took his memorable drive across the Corniche somewhere in the forties. This is the fairy-land of Monte Carlo, with its great and splendid turreted Casino, its exquisite green lawns and gardens, its brilliant rows of shops and cafés, its picturesque villas dotted up and down the smooth English-looking sward, its Italian terraces bordered by marble balustrades, its long flights of stately steps, its glorious luxuriance of feathery palm-trees, massive aloes-plants, thick clustering yucca blossoms, and heavy tropical foliage. All this panorama of wealth and beauty has been added to the little headland by the money lost and won in the gambling-house which Napoleon III. permitted his Serene Highness Prince Florestan to establish in the newly-annexed principality as some compensation for the loss of his sovereign rights over twelve hundred faithful subjects. To take you round the gaming-tables and other rooms, and to tell you all the story in due order, I think I had better begin by carrying you over from Nice, whence ninety-nine visitors out of a hundred really start, and doing showman for you over the entire principality.

We start, let us say, on a sunny March morning, from our hotel on the Promenade des Anglais, and drive along that beautiful parade, and through the splendid Avenue de la Gare, up to the

railway station, in time for the 10.45 train. We will take our ticket for Monaco only, and not for the little station which serves the Casino of Monte Carlo alone, because we wish to look over the town and palace before going in for the more exciting gaieties of the gaming-tables. There is no way of getting to Monaco except by railway, since the Corniche road rises far too high above the town to be of any use as a means of communication; and the only carriage route is that which leads into the place from Mentone on the Italian side. It was probably this inaccessibility of the town, and this impermeability of the seaward cliffs, which led Napoleon III. to grant the right of keeping a gambling-house to the Serenity of Monaco; for the railway was not then constructed, and it was a matter of some difficulty for stray passengers to reach his Highness's dominions. But the Emperor reckoned evidently without his host. A little steamer began to ply at once between Nice and Monaco; while a few years later, the railway had wound its course through all the jutting capes from Toulon to Genoa. So that nowadays the Casino at Monte Carlo is in direct communication with Marseilles and Paris. A lovelier line of rail you will not see between London and Kamschatka.

You get out at Monaco station, after a delightful run of forty minutes, and make your way up into the town. If you take a carriage, you must wind round the scarped rock by a zigzag road, which runs half-way up to the summit on one side of the peninsula, and then doubles round the other half on the opposite shore. But if you prefer your own legs to those of a Monegasque steed, you may mount by the old mediæval mule path—till very lately the trusty mule formed the only means of communication between the principality and the outer world—which rises by rapid steps over an ancient bridge and through a gateway of the fortifications to the Place d'Armes in front of the palace. Either road will open before you a series of exquisite coast views. The rock falls by a steep cliff on the landward side, and is surrounded by the sea in every other direction, so that it needed but little artificial fortification in the shape of rounded ramparts on the summit of its crags. The Place d'Armes lies between the palace and the town, and is ornamented by several plane-trees, a dozen bronze cannon, and the whole military force of the principality. In all probability, you will find the army engaged in performing its evolutions; and anything more ridiculous you never saw outside an Opéra Bouffe of Offenbach's. Twenty fantastically dressed soldiers, about half of whom are officers, compose the entire service; and they go through their mock drill with a mixture of gravity and nonchalance which is truly amusing. Add to this the fact that they all differ

grotesquely in height, thickness, and mode of hair-dressing, and you have a sufficient picture of the Monegasque army to parallel the familiar force of the Grand Duchess of Gerolstein. But the glimpses of bay and mountain on either side, looking toward France and Italy, are alone worth the trouble of a visit.

The palace itself does not contain very much which will interest the passing traveller. There is a rather handsome white façade, with a tower decorated by Mauresque battlements; and beneath the tower stand sculptured the arms of Monaco, supported by two monks with drawn swords, from which popular etymology explains the name of the town, by a false derivation from the Latin *monachus*. But the real origin of the word is far different. This old rock indeed marks one of the earliest Greek settlements on the coast of France. It was here that a little Phocæan colony pitched its tent, and had already attained to a respectable antiquity in the days of Hecataeus of Miletus. This colony, from its solitary position, was known as the Port of Heracles Monæcus (or the lonely); and in the middle ages the latter name became naturally corrupted into Monaco. From the similarity of sound arose the legend of the monkish etymology. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the monks of the Monaco arms are bearded and strongly armed, thus recalling some reminiscence of the original Heracles. 'C'est Hercule sous la bure,' says M. Jean Reynaud, to whom I owe these erudite recollections of the primitive city.

It would be a long piece of work to trace the chronicles of Monaco downward from that early date to the present day, and probably you would not care to hear them; for this little Mediterranean rock has had as much history as all the rest of France put together. Once, in the ninth century, the Moors took possession of it, and turned it for a while into an isolated fragment of Islam, the capital of a solitary Mohammedan colony. Then a Grimaldi drove them out, and established in turn a line of local princes—respectable pirates, in fact—who had as many dynastic quarrels, revolutions, and tragical ends as our own Plantagenets. Nevertheless, in spite of various intermediate occupations, Genoese, French, Provençal, Lombard, Spanish, and Bourbon, a Grimaldi by the female side still held the principality when the great European cataclysm of 1789 began to shake the thrones of mighty emperors and of petty princes alike. Monaco, always in the height of the fashion, at once declared itself a Republic, and asked for annexation to revolutionary France. The French were not slow at annexing in those days; and till the Restoration, the principality remained an integral part of the Napoleonic empire. But when, in 1814, the legitimate monarchs, great and small, were everywhere

throughout Europe restored to tax and torture their lawful subjects in due accordance with their divine rights, a Matignon-Grimaldi once more returned to bear sway over the six square miles of Monegasque territory. After the brief episode of the Hundred Days, the Holy Alliance solemnly sent back the representative of that ancient line, Honoré V., to make a triumphal entry into his rebellious capital. If you wish to know what Divine Right is like, you may read M. Abel Rendu's graphic account of how Honoré V. governed during the rest of his days his handful of unwilling subjects. The tale would be ridiculous by the pettiness of its tyrannies were it not rendered terrible by their intensity. The Prince of Monaco was the relentless Bomba of a miniature Naples. His fathers indeed had chastised the people with whips, but Prince Honoré chastised them with scorpions.

Amongst other ingenious devices, says M. Rendu, the Prince discovered a new mode of exaction called the *monopoly of cereals*. He made himself the sole miller and cornfactor of his dominions. Everyone must eat the Prince's bread, and pay the Prince's price for it. Any person, Monegasque or foreigner, who bought or eat of any unauthorised flour was punished by fine and imprisonment. To make matters worse, the Prince's corn was not only dear but also bad, the cheapest and vilest sweepings of the Genoese and Marseillais markets. Travellers passing through the country must leave their sandwiches at the Prince's custom-house; and workmen coming to their daily work from beyond the borders could not carry their humble luncheon in their pockets, to the prejudice of our lord the Prince, his crown and dignity. The skipper of some little fishing bark who brought a few remaining loaves from Nice or Bordighera into the harbour unconsumed was liable to have his vessel confiscated and be fined a round sum of money into the bargain. Every baker had to keep a register of the amount of bread purchased by each family; and if the consumption seemed under the average, the Prince's gendarmes made a quiet domiciliary visit in search of a hidden barrel suspected to contain contraband flour. The poor wretch found guilty of eating untaxed bread went to prison, and his children to the dogs.

Similarly, Honoré V. had a monopoly of education. He established a college at Mentone, and promulgated a law that no one but his own professors could keep a school or give private lessons within the principality. Moreover, he instituted a complicated cattle-tax in accordance with which every peasant had to register at once the birth and sex of every calf or lamb, on the day of its arrival, and upon stamped paper, out of which, of course, the Prince turned another honest penny. If the creature died, the fact

must be notified to the police, or else the family were held to have sold it outside the boundary-line, without the knowledge and to the great damage of our sovereign lord. By these and many like petty exactions, Honoré V. managed to pocket in twenty-five years (says M. Adolphe Joanne) no less a plum than six million francs—a very reasonable remuneration for the arduous task of governing six thousand souls. Had the office been submitted to public competition by open tender, no doubt many a respectable provincial mayor would gladly have undertaken all the duties for a round sum of two hundred a year.

Prince Florestan, his successor, was compelled to abolish the corn monopoly, but still stuck to the other princely abuses. Accordingly in 1848, as I have already mentioned, the better half of his dominions, including Mentone and Roccabruna, declared themselves independent, and so remained till the French annexation of Nice. At that period, his Highness of Monaco, always ready to look at every political change in a commercial spirit, sold to the Emperor his shadowy feudal rights over his revolted lieges for another lump sum of a hundred and sixty thousand pounds sterling. Moreover, he obtained leave to open his gaming-tables at the Casino, and so prepared the way for his present magnificent fortune. A private person who should make a living by keeping roulette-tables would not be looked upon with favour in general society, but as Prince Florestan is a crowned head, and the descendant of so many respectable hereditary plunderers, with a pedigree reaching back to a land pirate of the tenth century, we must not be guilty of *scandalum magnatum* by calling him ugly names. So we will leave the poor blind old man unmolested in his great white roomy palace, haunted only by the ghosts of the ruined men who blow their brains out at Monte Carlo, after losing their last Napoleon, at the appalling rate of some dozen per annum. Monaco is a beautiful little domain, but still I would not like to stand in the Prince's shoes.

The palace I shall not describe at length. You may read all about it in your Murray. There is a great courtyard with a vast marble staircase, leading to a sort of cloistered arcade, decorated with good frescoes. There are Louis Quinze reception rooms, and square yards of pictures, and a gilded chapel, and a great many inlaid floors, and all the usual comfortless upholstery of royal or noble inconvenience. You have seen it all before, at home or abroad, and you come away with a sense of relief that you have one less palace to see in your threescore years and ten, and one more palace well behind you for ever. And then you go on with a clear conscience to Monte Carlo.

The road winds down the hill once more, with lovely views over coast and mountains ; and then, about half a mile eastward, passing through pretty gardens and villas by the sea-shore, you reach at last the great Casino itself. Everything about it, as the Americans say, is 'free, gratis, given away for nothing.' The main object being to attract the public to the gaming-tables, all the beauties and amusements of the place are lavished upon us without stint or question, as so many allurements towards the central point of the Casino. And since I know by experience that when I have once got you into the rooms where the gambling goes on, I shall never get you out in time to see or admire anything else about Monte Carlo, I shall begin by first taking you the entire round of the gardens and buildings, as a measure of precaution lest you should never see them at all. The man who once begins gambling is utterly lost to the beauties of nature. He may win or he may lose, but from that moment forth he is wholly incapable of thinking about anything except the chances upon twenty-seven.

But how to describe such a perfect fairy-land of delight I know not. It all looks like a scene at a theatre in pantomime time, not like a prosaic bit of real earth. Around us is the blue Mediterranean, broken on every side into a hundred little sapphire bays. Back of us rise tier after tier of Maritime Alps, their huge summits clouded by a fleecy mist. To the left is the white rock of Monaco : to the right, the green Italian shore, fading away into the purple mountains which guard the Gulf of Genoa. Lovely by nature, the scene has been made still more lovely by art. From the water's edge, terraces of tropical vegetation rise one after another toward the grand façade of the Casino, divided by parapets of marble balustrades, and connected with one another by broad flights of Florentine steps. No language can do justice to those beautiful and fantastic gardens. Clusters of palms and aloes, their base girt round with rare exotic flowers, are cunningly thrust in the foreground of every beautiful view, so that you see the bay and the mountains through the artistic vistas thus deftly arranged in the very spot where a painter's fancy would have set them. You look across to Monaco past a clump of drooping date-branches : you catch a glimpse of Bordighera through a framework of spreading dracænas and quaintly symmetrical fan-palms. In the very centre of the picture, the Casino itself stands up before a background of mountains, embowered in the oriental foliage of a hundred lovely and strange-shaped trees. Never was a siren more beautiful or more deadly than Monte Carlo. Exquisite views abound on every side. It seems like a poet's midsummer dream,

strangely crystallized into solid reality by a passing wave of Titania's wand.

We will go round to the opposite or northern façade, where the principal entrance gives admission to the rooms. On our way we pass two or three coquettish-looking shops, laid temptingly out with bonnets, jewelry, æsthetic pottery, and works of art; for people who have won largely are not likely to spend stingily, and there are many ladies about with fashionable dresses and shady antecedents who are not slow to make acquaintance with the fortunate winner of the day. The front of the Casino faces a large open square, with handsome greensward, and fountains, and parterres of rare blossoms, flanked on one side by a magnificent restaurant and on the other by the splendid Hôtel de Paris, where you can get a capital lunch at strict Monte Carlo prices. For I can assure you that Monte Carlo, though its universal motto be *Entrée libre*, is certainly no place for persons with modest purses.

You walk up the grand entrance staircase and through the swinging glass doors of the Casino. Within lies a large and handsome vestibule, its roof supported by solid marble and porphyry pillars. Here the world in general promenades at intervals to cool itself after the feverish heat of the gaming-tables. To your right are the reading-rooms and *salons de conversation*. You may go in and out as you please, and enjoy for nothing the use of two hundred European newspapers, brought from London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg, by the fastest trains. In the centre stands the Theatre, where a splendid band, said to be the best in Europe, discourses Offenbach and Strauss twice daily to all comers without charge. All free as the air—*except the tables*. Many quiet people come over here from Nice or Mentone once a week or so, and enjoy these simpler pleasures, together with the gardens and the exquisite views, literally for nothing, since they never enter the gaming-rooms. But most people pay in the long run enough by their losses at roulette not only to keep up all these amusements, but also to bring in the Prince and his delegate a truly splendid revenue.

To the left are the *salles de jeu*, with their roulette tables and their *trente-et-quarante*. This is the only part of the Casino which you cannot enter without question or comment; but here you need a little personal ticket of introduction, which, however, is a mere formality, handed over at once to all comers on presentation of their cards in the vestibule. Furnished with this indispensable piece of pasteboard, you enter the rooms and take your place at one of the tables. As you pass up, you have just time to

notice, first, that the rooms, in spite of their immense size, are frightfully hot, doubtless from the large number of feverish human hearts and lungs all throbbing and panting their suppressed emotions ; and secondly, that the apartments are richly decorated in the Mauresque style of the Alhambra, though with far less taste and harmony of colour than in our own Alhambra Court at the Crystal Palace. At Monte Carlo there is a certain subdued tinge of vulgar garishness in the style which fittingly accords with the nature of the institution.

There are altogether some ten or twelve tables in the two gambling-rooms. If you have never seen a roulette table before, say at Hombourg or Baden-Baden in the old days, you will be some time before you can discover on what principle the money is lost and won. All you will see at first is a number of long tables, each surrounded by rows of well-dressed men and better dressed women three files deep, and each covered by heaps of gold and notes, scattered about mysteriously on certain cabalistic numbers, squares, and diamonds ; the larger part of which the croupier rakes in with a small wooden cue, after each turn of the roulette wheel. (But after a while you will see that the game is simple enough, all its complexity depending upon the variety of ways in which you may stake your money. The roulette wheel contains a small pea, which may jump out into any one of thirty-seven compartments, numbered from zero to thirty-six respectively. Moreover, each alternate number is coloured red or white. On the table are thirty-six numbered squares, from one to thirty-six. You may, if you like, simply put your money on red or on black, in which case, if you win, you receive just the amount you risked. Or you may stake on any one of the numbers separately, say twenty ; in which case the winner pockets thirty-five times his stake. Or again, you may back any one of four numbers, by putting your coin on the angles where they meet ; and then if any of the four are successful, you win twice what you risk. Or, finally, you may back any one row of twelve figures against the two other rows. In every case the amount of your winnings depends upon the number of chances against you. Of course, when zero turns up, everybody loses, and the bank makes a haul. Otherwise, it stands to lose or win merely the difference between its takings and its payments, which are on the average about equal. In other words, the bank wins in the long run about one haul to the good out of every thirty-seven. Not a bad percentage, either, considering the vast sums of money always on the table.

At roulette the minimum sum is five francs ; the maximum is six thousand. *Trente-et-quarante*, a more aristocratic game, is

only played for gold, the smallest allowable stake being a napoleon. At both games, the regular players, who come early on purpose, have chairs to accommodate them around the tables. There they sit, with large rolls of gold on the table before them, marking down with a dot the winning colours or numbers, and staking their twenty or thirty napoleons on every turn. Ladies predominate among the regular gamblers, many of them young and pretty, though not all of them, I fancy, strictly correct in their ways. Many people speak of the eagerness depicted on every face, the anxious look, the obvious despair; but I cannot say I have noticed anything of the sort. What strikes me rather is the stolid indifference with which every one of them, men and women alike, seems to win or lose a couple of hundred pounds or so on each throw of the pea, as though it did not in the least matter to them whether they or the bank took up the money. I think they are mostly rich and *blasé* people, who can afford to throw away thousands, and who throw them away carelessly for the sake of the small modicum of excitement which the uncertainty yields to their jaded palates. You must remember that since Hombourg and Baden-Baden were suppressed, Monaco concentrates upon itself the whole gambling strength of Europe.

The outside players, who crowd so thickly around all the tables that you and I have some difficulty in edging our way to a position where we can see the game, are mostly of a different type. They are casual visitors from Nice or Mentone, who are looking on like ourselves and staking an occasional louis or two on what they imagine to be a lucky number. Here is a beardless young man at our side who is persistently laying down a five-franc piece on 22. Time after time, at intervals of twenty seconds, he sees his money swept in with unvarying regularity. Still, he insists on backing 22. If he goes on long enough, he will probably win back all he has lost, except one five-franc piece out of every thirty-seven. But it may take him a week or two, and I doubt if his purse will hold out long enough. Here, again, is a timid-looking girl, with her husband, venturing a louis on the right-hand column: she has lost five louis already, and I hope when this one goes she will leave off satisfied. There, the zero has turned up, and the croupier is making a clean sweep of all the table. But now she is coaxing another gold piece out of her husband, who, I regret to say, is weak enough to yield. Seven wins: that is a left-hand number, and her louis is gone. See the croupier dexterously raking in all the gold off the losing numbers, the losing colours, the losing columns, the losing quarters, and leaving winners all untouched. Then he carelessly ladles out the sums they have won, and begins

again before you can say Jack Robinson. That impassive old man in the crowd there had a thousand francs on seven, and he has won thirty-five thousand francs. He will drop them all again before the end of the day, probably. But I wish that timid little lady would leave off staking her louis; she doesn't look as if she could afford to lose them.

On the whole, viewed merely as betting, it is a bad way of risking your money. I am not going to moralise, for Monte Carlo is not exactly the place to preach a sermon. But supposing you want to bet, you can bet much better in other ways. If you and I play *rouge-et-noir* by a turn-up at cards for a sovereign a cut, we stand to lose or win on an average at an equality with one another. We back our luck at no special disadvantage. But if we play with a bank which gives itself one extra chance out of every thirty-seven, we are backing our luck against unequal odds. In the long run, the bank *must* win from us. We have only to play so many times on an average to contribute with almost unerring certainty one napoleon towards the revenues of the Prince of Monaco. And, on the whole, I prefer spending my napoleon myself in getting a good luncheon at the Hôtel de Paris.

On the other hand, you must not suppose that everybody necessarily or invariably loses. Taking one case with another, for every thirty-seven francs lost by one player, another player wins thirty-six, the bank subsisting regally upon the margin of one franc. It does not seem much to keep up these magnificent rooms and grounds, and leave a revenue for the Prince as well; but when you look at the vast heaps of gold covering every table in the place, from an early hour in the morning till eleven at night, you can easily fancy that one gold piece out of every thirty-seven on each throw is quite enough to make a living out of. What most surprised me, when I first came to Monte Carlo, was the exceedingly high play. I was prepared for everything save three points: the large number of tables; the immense crowd of players jostling each other round every table; and the extremely large sums which they put down on every turn. There was more play and more universally high play than I had at all anticipated.

Accordingly, one hears every now and then of people who have made large fortunes. Such things are indeed quite possible. A young German last year won, it is said, sixteen thousand pounds in a few days. But then, one must remember that the chances are always rather against you than for you, and above all, that the longest purse has always the advantage. A few people win very large sums. A few more win moderate sums. A good many win a little. A large number neither lose nor win. And the

majority, say two out of three, lose more or less heavily. The commonest losers are the people who, dropping in like you and me, put on a sovereign or two in a casual way on a single number, and do not care to go on after losing a dozen times. But the greatest danger is that of going on when you lose, in order to win back your losses. That is the way that almost all the worst gamblers begin. They mostly end with suicide.

This is the terrible and dark side to Monaco, and almost makes me wonder whether we do right to come here and enjoy the lovely gardens, the sweet music, the exquisite flowers. For all these things have been bought with the price of blood. Suicides are very common at Monte Carlo. Only the other day, as the story went at Nice, a young Russian naval officer, the paymaster of a frigate lying in Villefranche harbour, went over to Monte Carlo with six thousand francs in his pocket—borrowed, said some people, with what truth I know not, from the ship's chest—and lost it all in an afternoon. The poor fellow tried to blow his brains out at once, but miserably failed, and remains a maimed and mangled wreck for life, too horrible for description here. One hears dozens of such stories at Nice, stories that make one shudder with horror, and send a cold tremor down one's inmost spine. They take off a little from the gilded splendour of this Moorish hall, whose beauties we have hardly time to notice in the midst of so much eager human emotion.

But before we go, let us walk round once or twice and cast a general glance at all the tables. Here they are, not less than five hundred men and women, fifty or sixty round each board, playing away as if for very life, and so absorbed in the game that they notice nothing else. Germans, I fancy, predominate. You can pick out the German women at once by their flat, impassive faces, their cautious but heavy play, and their atrociously bad though very costly jewelry. After them, it seems to me, come the Americans. That pronounced young lady opposite, with the bold but handsome features, the exquisite bonnet and mantle, and the remarkably fine Pennsylvanian twang, may be seen here every afternoon, risking broad gold pieces with true American recklessness. There is a large sprinkling of English, many of them young lads in tourist suits, too young, I think, to be exposed to such temptations. 'Don't tell mamma I played,' we heard one of them say as he alighted from the train at Nice the other evening; 'she would break her heart over it.' I was glad to see even that much penitence in the poor lad; and I hope he has not quietly pawned his watch and come over once more to retrieve his fortunes and conceal his losses. There are few French comparatively

though those who play, especially the women, play very high. Most of the ladies *are* ladies : but there is a fair sprinkling of elegantly dressed women who do not exactly belong to the circle of society. They play most recklessly of all, and believe enormously in lucky numbers. It is still early in the afternoon : but the four o'clock train from Nice will bring over a host of bad characters, male and female, who carry on the play up to eleven at night.

You *will* stake something, will you? Well, if you must, I can't prevent you. You put a napoleon on red. It loses. Bah, the chances are only even. If you win next time, you will only get your own napoleon back again. So you go on a column. Lost again. Well, you will back a number this time. Your choice is 32. Whirr goes the roulette : 'Dix-huit,' cries the croupier. Your napoleon and about a thousand others are gone. Come away before you lose any more. If you put down another coin, I know you will be in for it and will never come away till you are cleaned out. Happily, I have money enough to take you back, if you lose your last five francs ; so you will not have to trudge home to Nice by the footpath over the Turbia, like a young American at our hotel the other day.

You have had enough of it, have you? That is well. Let us come away, and go out into the fresh open air. The heat in these rooms is stifling. I am tired of these fat German princesses, these sleek Parisian elegants, these stolid American gamblers. We swing the great door upon its hinges, and go out into the corridor, bowed from the room with great dignity by a well liveried attendant. There is plenty of obsequiousness at Monte Carlo for everybody, even if he has lost his last louis.

We emerge once more upon the beautiful terrace, the glorious view, the waving, pencilled palm-trees. All around us, the Italian sun is lighting up the lovely coast with brilliant splendour. Bay and rock and mountain look all the more exquisite after that hot and crowded gaming-room. And there, high up on the shoulders of the Turbia, the great Roman tower looks down majestically with a kind of mute contempt on the throng of busy idlers who pour in and out all day through the marble portal of the Casino. It is well to have seen Monte Carlo for once, but one feels it would be a healthier excursion to climb up those grand old ledges and visit the silent monument which still gazes down with such calm serenity upon the motley throng who come so rudely to disturb its peace to-day after twenty centuries of unbroken solitude.

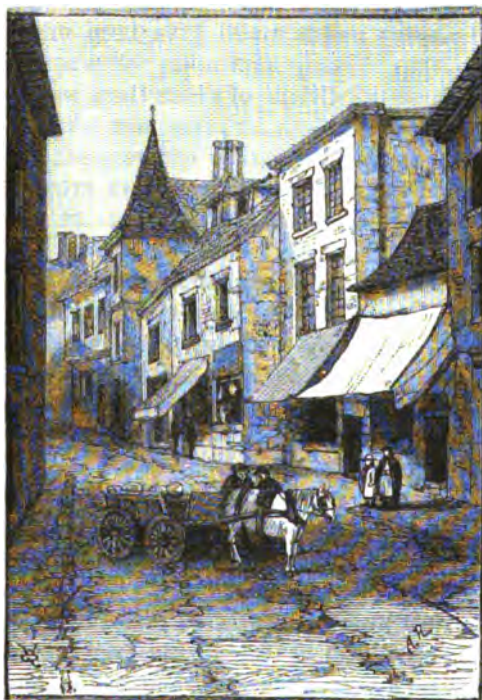
J. ARBUTHNOT WILSON.

Rambles about Eton.

I.

THERE are some men who look back upon their school-days with no particular amount of pleasure; and some, indeed, like Cowper, who only regard them as a dreadful dream—for at Dr. Pitman's no effort seems to have been made to shield him from the torments of his persecutors. Great have been the improvements in the management of schools since Voltaire sarcastically said that he would have supposed the pupils of an ordinary academy were juvenile convicts. Not half a century ago any attempt to make learning pleasant met with general dissent, and it would have been urged that the real use of schools—the enforcing unpleasant duties as discipline—was forgotten, and hardly a satirist—of whom there was always a plentiful army—took up the cudgels for persecuted scholars. Within the limit of time mentioned, the writer can remember a pedagogue who was equal to either Squeers or Creakle in cruelty, though, unlike either of them, he had taken a high degree at one of the colleges in Turle Street; but his infirmity, for such it proved ultimately to be, was a great recommendation to the parents and guardians of the day. His academy was only open to the wealthy, or those who held some acknowledged position; yet at every quarter-day he had more applications from guardians and parents than he could possibly attend to. It is, however, not too much to say that his school would not now be tolerated. Eton has improved in its discipline since the days when a pupil used to look forward to his final release, and now, indeed, we never meet an Etonian or Harrow man who cannot look back to his school-days as the pleasantest period of his life. At a public school, as the saying is, every youth finds his proper level. Railways have done much in the same direction now, and this discipline is less needed; but before these increased and multiplied through the land it was quite common for some youth to come from the country, the idol of his mother, and flattered from early childhood by a gamekeeper or a groom. George III. is said to have related with great gusto a tale of a Scotch schoolmaster who accompanied him to the door of the schoolroom with his hat on, and when outside the door he said to the uncovered monarch, who, by the way, was then only Prince of Wales, 'You will not think me wanting in courtesy, I hope, but the fact is this—that if the boys thought there was anyone else as important as myself, I should never get any obedi-

ence again.'—Well, many youths go to the great public schools even yet, and only learn their relative position when they get there; nor indeed, as a rule, do they take their newly acquired knowledge unkindly. They meet other youths there who can shoot or play cricket better than they can, and are quite as important in every way. But in another and far more important sense this rule holds good. Light is brought to bear upon masters themselves, and the tyrants that were to be met with in private schools a generation or more ago (and of my own knowledge I could enumerate several) would not be able to keep their places for a single term at such schools as Eton or Harrow, whatever their attainments or their industry might be. And as this part of the



In Old Windsor.

subject naturally can only extend to an introduction, I may mention one example of the two methods of instilling learning; and the example I would choose was a youth of perhaps thirteen or fourteen years. He was not wanting in any advantages; but a plain, perhaps almost stupid, appearance made him the butt of the irresponsible master, who caused his life to be so much a burden to him that he became almost lethargic. Owing to illness, a Cambridge fellow—a perfect gentleman—took the place of the invalid master, and I

remember his saying to the delinquent: 'Come, my man, don't be beaten by an ode in Horace; bring your book up here.' A perfect change came over him, and at Oxford he became a first-class scholar. The shrievalty of his county, albeit a small one, two years after leaving college, showed the estimation he was held in; but he used to declare that the four years' tyranny at a private school had saddened his life—which, indeed, was a short one.

What a contrast both Eton and Harrow present! Nobody can walk from Slough to Eton without being struck with the genial, happy appearance of the youths he will meet; and sometimes we have regretted that a want of personal acquaintance with them has been a bar to asking them to have a boat, and pull to Staines for lunch.

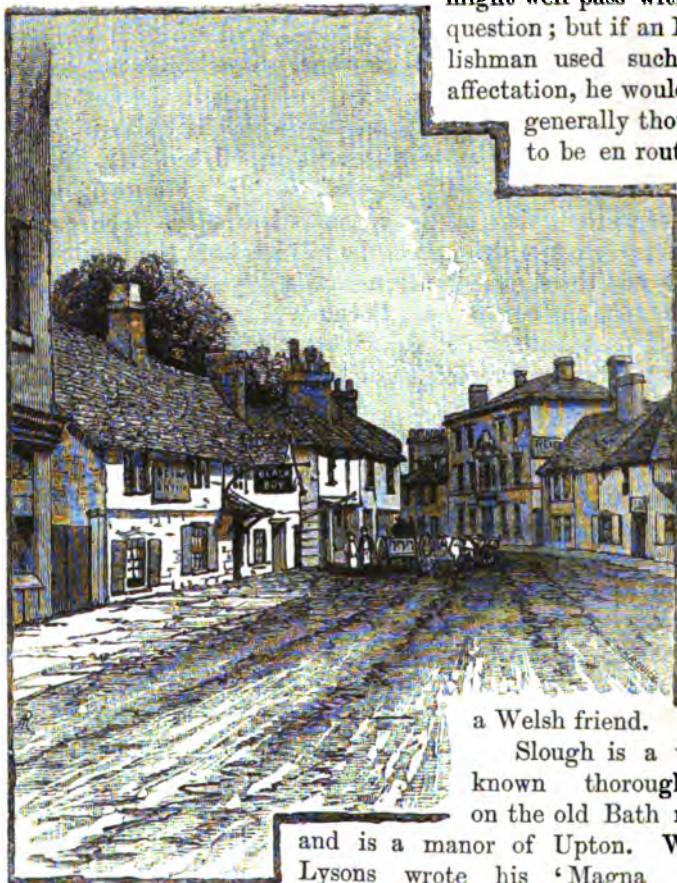
It is, of course, not necessary to say anything about Windsor. It has been so often and well described, that we seem to know it when we see it even for the first time. Windsor is not exceeded either in dignity or interest by any residence in the world, and it stands in quiet, rich English scenery, which is quite in keeping with its now peaceful associations. Peaceful, however, they have not always been, for here William I. established himself, and bid defiance to the chiefs of the conquered country. The enormous pile of buildings which covers the hill has been the result of successive additions during seven hundred years, and it of course bears hardly any resemblance to the Windsor where the Conqueror received the submission of the Saxon chiefs, and entertained the Norman barons. The doings of Henry I., David King of Scotland, and John, at Windsor, are familiar to everyone from their early history-books. And St. George's Hall, which was built at the most excellent period of Gothic architecture for the Knights of the Garter as a banqueting-hall, is quite as familiar, from a hundred illustrations, to everyone in England, as St. Paul's or Westminster.

But, as our interest is now more with the precincts of Eton, we may suppose ourselves leaving it for a walk through Slough, Maidenhead, Bray, and Clewer, and back again through Windsor to Eton, along the right bank of the Thames.

Slough is pronounced in the same way as 'plough,' and affords one of the many examples of the flexibility of 'ugh' in the English language; indeed, how puzzled a foreigner must often be with our pronunciation may be gathered from an incident which, at the time, rather puzzled the writer. He was residing in a colony, and at the time referred to some merchandise was exported from England for himself and a friend, who was an excellent scholar, and could write or speak French and Latin almost as easily as English; but he had never been in England. He told me one day that the 'Thay-mees' had arrived with our expected parcels. He adopted a classic sort of pronunciation that, unhappily, is only beginning to be expunged from the Universities, if even that, and it was long before I could realise the importance of his information. 'The Tems, you mean, I suppose,' I said to him; and though in the ordinary way of life he must have written the word

'Thames' hundreds of times as far as it is connected with London or Eton, it never occurred to him to connect the river with the name of the ship. It would be interesting to learn how the river that flows through Windsor is pronounced in the various capitals of Europe. A Frenchman who said that he was going to 'Paree,' so far as this can be supposed to hit the French pronunciation,

might well pass without question; but if an Englishman used such an affectation, he would be generally thought to be en route to



Slough.

a Welsh friend.

Slough is a well-known thoroughfare on the old Bath road, and is a manor of Upton. When Lysons wrote his '*Magna Britannia*' it was the residence of the great Dr. Herschel, and its name is always connected with the 40-feet telescope that led to discoveries which have immortalised his name. First he lived at Datchet, and then at Slough, and, as Arago says, '*Le nom de ce village ne périra plus: les sciences le transmettront religieusement à la postérité la plus reculée.*' The large telescope, it is said, was not the one which led to some of his principal discoveries, as it was too slow in its operations; but it had its own important work

to fulfil. Arago well says that the name of Slough village will never perish, for even the name of Herschel's sister, Caroline, would be enough to preserve it. 'She wrote down all his observations, which he dictated from his stage, whilst engaged in sweeping the heavens with his 20-feet or other telescopes; she attended him in all his night watches, which were generally continued up to the approach of daylight; she noted the clocks, reduced and arranged his journals, prepared the zone catalogues for his sweeps, and executed the whole of the laborious numerical calculations which were required for the reduction of his observations'; and sometimes, when Herschel had for a time suspended his observations, she would search the heavens herself with a 5-feet reflector which her brother had constructed for her, and she thus made some valuable discoveries. When the great astronomer died, this venerable lady retired to her native city of Hanover, and expired in the ninety-eighth year of her age, profoundly respected by men of science from all parts of the world, and justly honoured by crowned heads, who, indeed, honoured themselves when they contributed their own acknowledgments to the great value of her services to science—services which were continued almost to the end of an unusually protracted life. Slough is in the middle of a very beautiful country, and it is perhaps known as the nearest station to Stoke Pogis Church, where Gray wrote the *Elegy* that neither time nor repetition can mar or rob of its inherent beauty. But this will come in for a separate notice. Some improvement, it is satisfactory to see, is taking place in the hotel accommodation at Slough, which, till lately, was not all that could be desired.

Boveney Lock lies on our route, and it is a quiet, picturesque old place. Many heavy 'golden bream' have been caught here, and sometimes the troller lights upon a heavy Thames trout. The church is a small old-fashioned building, with heavy beams across, and the traveller is shown an unusually massive key. In the year 1737 an Act of Parliament was passed to make the small ancient church a separate cure, but it was inoperative, as sufficient funds could not be procured for its endowment. We must leave the route now to turn off towards Burnham, which, however, lies within an easy distance of Eton, and can always be reached with a slight lift from the sail, if time is an object in making the excursion from the college.

Burnham lies about three miles to the north-east of Maidenhead, and a mile to the north of the London road, which used to pass through here to Oxford and Bath. Burnham was at one time a place of consideration, and had a fair; and market, and an Abbey. The first Abbess was Margery Eston, and the last, Margaret Gibson. At the dissolution of monasteries the revenues

amounted to 5*l.* 2*s.* 4½*d.*, a sum which would go as far in the necessities of life in those days, and in those parts, as about 750*l.* would now with us. In those parts I especially say, for the difference in living in different parts of England was ludicrously dissimilar—even more so than it is at present, when, for example, a groom in some country parts of England is satisfied with 16*s.* a-week, but the same functionary would very easily command 25*s.* in other parts. Abbess Margaret Gibson signed her name to a document acknowledging the King's supremacy some two years before the dissolution, and was rewarded with a pension of 15*l.* Burnham is especially known by its beech-trees, and Burnham beeches have for long been favourite subjects with artists at all academies in England. The engraving annexed almost suggests a banyan tree, from its intense foliage and shade. I borrow an excellent description of the Burnham beeches from a well-known writer, for it is less familiar than some of his published works. 'Within five-and-twenty miles of St. Paul's, the Great Western Railway will place us in an hour (having an additional walk of two miles) in the heart of one of the most secluded districts in England. We know nothing of forest scenery equal to Burnham, which is approached from the station at Maidenhead. The beeches may be reached by several roads, each very beautiful in its seclusion. We ascend a hill, and find a common with a few scattered houses. Gradually the common begins to grow less open. We see large masses of wood in clumps, and now and then a gigantic tree by the road. The trunks of these scattered trees are of gigantic size. They are for the most part pollards; but, not having been lopped for many years, they have thrown out mighty arms, which give us a notion of some deformed son of Anak, noble as well as fearful in his grotesque proportions. As we advance the wood thickens, and as the road leads us into a deep well we are at length completely obscured in a leafy wilderness. This dell is a most romantic spot: it extends for some quarter of a mile between overhanging banks covered with the graceful forms of the ash and the birch, while the contorted beeches show their fantastic roots and unwieldy trunks upon the edge of the glen in singular contrast. If we walk up this valley, we may emerge into the plain of beeches, from which the place derives its name. It is not easy to make scenes such as these interesting by description; the great charm may be readily conceived when it is known that its characteristic is an entire absence of human care.'

If we traverse the banks of the Thames, in place of making an excursion to Burnham, we shall come across a mansion that has many quaint and interesting associations. Down Place has often





Burnham Beeches.

been altered and enlarged, but it was the residence of the celebrated Jacob Tonson, who published Dryden's works, and who used to keep a sort of open house for men of letters. The old part still remains, and faces the river; and though the situation is beautiful, the house itself has no more attractions than Strawberry Hill. Here the famous Kit-Cat Club was formed, which consisted of men of standing and wealth whose real object was to support the house of Hanover, and to strengthen the hands of the Bentincks, the Cavendishes, the Russells and Grenvilles, and others whose energy did so much to set the House of Hanover firmly on the throne. In those days publishers occupied a more arduous position than they do now, when wealth and business capacity are, of necessity, among the first requirements; for literary men are readily procurable as readers or editors who can relieve them of much of their old duties, and allow them to devote more time to the mercantile part of their calling. There is an amusing anecdote of Tonson which Lord Bolingbroke relates. He was once paying a visit to Dryden, and some one called whose step and voice the poet well knew; he turned suddenly to Lord Bolingbroke, and begged him not to leave until the publisher had gone, for, said he, 'I know it's Tonson;' and he added that if he left before him, he would be alone with the great publisher, and, as he was a little behindhand with some proof, he would be fearfully scolded. Dunton published the 'Life and Errors' of Tonson, and he speaks about him as a man who has been 'characterised as a sort of wild Defoe, a coarser mind cast in somewhat a like mould.' He figures in the 'Dunciad,' though not with the same sarcastic satire that has immortalised Curll in the same publication. Guy, the founder of the hospital, may almost be said to have belonged to the same set. His publishing house was close to Barnett's Banking Company. But the most generally esteemed publisher was Cave, whose memoirs Johnson wrote, and who was for some time in a half-conscious state, owing to lethargic illness; but he woke up before his death just to see and to recognise the lexicographer, 'fondly to press the hand that now writes this little narrative,' as his biographer says. Cave was brought up at Rugby, under the tutorship of Holyock, and he gave early promise of literary excellence. He was afterwards placed in the office of a timber-merchant, where he again gave great satisfaction, but finally he was apprenticed to Collins, a deputy-Alderman of London, and a printer and publisher of high standing. This change was much to his taste, and he has the credit of founding monthly magazines, to secure the fleeting contributions that had but an ephemeral life in pamphlets and broad-sheets. He had saved enough money in 1731 to found the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' of which there was so great a want at

the time that its success became pronounced soon after, and which still flourishes with unabated vigour. He was, as Pope has said of Gay, 'uncorrupted even among the great,' and when clerk of the Frank Office he refused to let an epistle of the old Duchess of Marlborough be forwarded free of expense to its destination on the strength of a frank from W. Plummer, M.P. For this he was summoned to the bar of the House; but he had in every sense the better of the argument.

Maidenhead, or, as it used to be called, Maidenhythe, is soon reached, and it is a neat, clean, comfortable country town, without many claims to being considered picturesque. The bridge is exceedingly beautiful, but the town itself is new, and perhaps hardly dates earlier than the bridge, which was built quite at the end of the last century.

Maidenhead is the nearest station to the celebrated village of Bray, which has gained immortality through its accommodating vicar, who gracefully surrendered his creed to each succeeding monarch. The song which has rendered him famous is an anachronism, for the real vicar lived during the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, while the popular vicar is supposed to have published his creed during the reign of George I.; and it is pretty certain that it is a production of one of the members of the Kit-Cat Club. Satirists and historians have shown again and again the laxity and the servility of the parochial clergy; and a chaplain—who in those days was almost as indispensable to a moderately important household as a steward—hardly ranked above a head gamekeeper, nor was he permitted, except under certain conditions (which in the case of the head of the Wynn family are humorous in the extreme, and happen to be before me), to dine with his 'patron.' If the chaplain was of a congenial turn, and sufficiently instructed to amuse his employer, he would have the family living, or some other family living, when a vacancy occurred, and then of course he was the humble servant to the house. I had some little difficulty in getting a reliable copy of the song, but believe that the following is nearly correct:—

In good King Charles's golden days,
 When loyalty no harm meant,
 A zealous High Churchman was I,
 And so I got preferment.
 To teach my flock I never missed,
 Kings were by God appointed,
 And damn'd are those that do resist
 Or touch the Lord's anointed.
 For this is law I will maintain
 Until my dying day, Sir,
 Whatever King in England reign,
 I'll be the Vicar of Bray, Sir.

When Royal James obtained the crown
 And Popery came in fashion,
 The penal laws I hooted down
 And read the Declaration.
 The Church of Rome I found would fit
 Full well my constitution,
 And had become a Jesuit
 But for the Revolution.

When William was our King declar'd,
 To ease a nation's grievance,
 With this new wind about I steer'd,
 And swore to him allegiance.
 Old principles I did revoke,
 Set conscience at a distance ;
 Passive obedience was a joke,
 A jest was non-resistance.

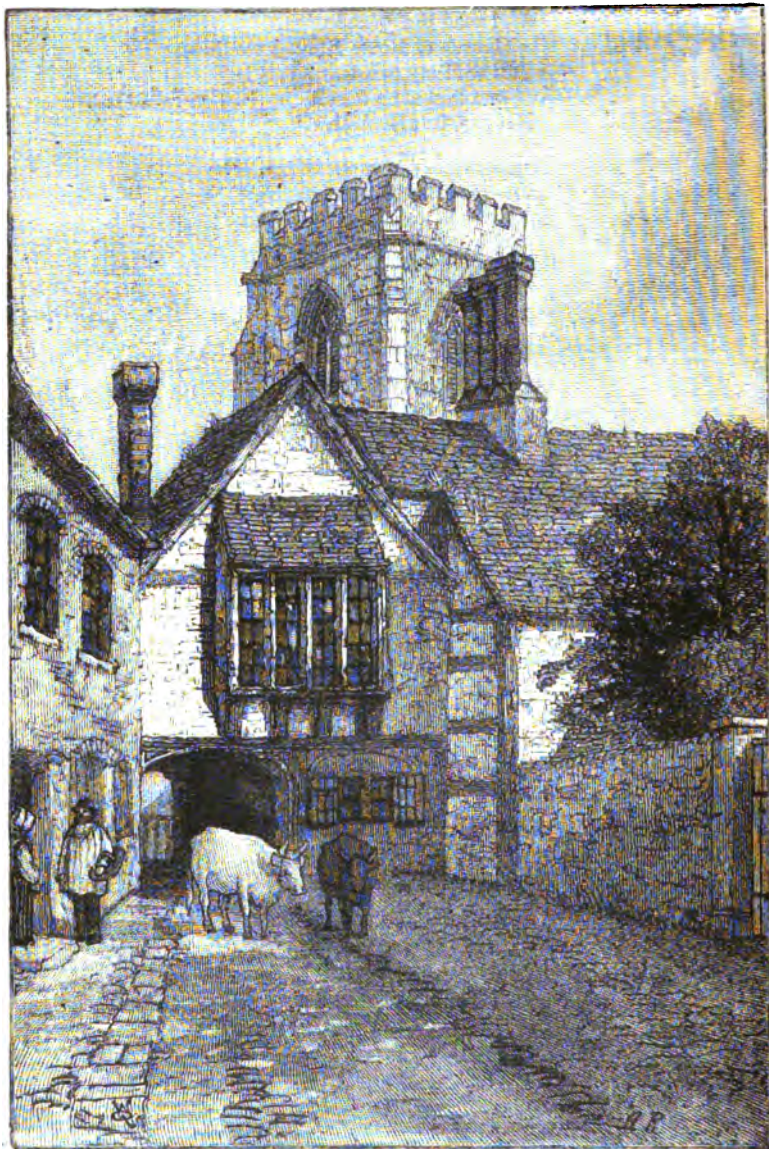
When gracious Anne became our Queen,
 The Church of England's glory,
 Another face of things was seen,
 And I became a Tory.
 Occasional Conformists base
 I damn'd their moderation,
 And thought the Church in danger was
 By such prevarication.

When George in pudding-time came o'er,
 And moderate men looked big, Sir,
 I turned a cat-in-a-pan once more,
 And so I became a Whig, Sir.
 And thus preferment I procured
 From our new faith's defender,
 And almost every day abjured
 The Pope and the Pretender.

The illustrious House of Hanover
 And Protestant succession,
 To these I do allegiance swear
 While they can keep possession.
 For in my faith and loyalty
 I never more will falter,
 And George my lawful King shall be
 Until the times shall alter.

The real Vicar of Bray is a hero among Fuller's 'Worthies,' and he seems to have had a decided liking for a quiet life. His name is put down as Symon Symonds ; but after carefully looking at an old record where it appears, I hardly think that this is correct. Fuller, speaking of him, says : 'The vivacious vicar thereof living under Henry VIII., King Edward VI., Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, was first a Papist, then a Protestant, then a Papist, and then a Protestant again. He had seen some martyrs burnt (two

miles off) at Windsor, and found this fire too hot for his tender temper. This vicar, being taxed by one for being a turncoat and



Bray Church.

an inconstant changeling, said: "Not so. I always kept my principle, which is this—To live and die the vicar of Bray." It must not be

supposed that the present beautiful vicarage is the one to which the sturdy vicar so resolutely clung; for it is comparatively a new residence, and has recently been altered. The house shown at the entrance of the churchyard is said to be the genuine residence. Of this I could not form an opinion, but all the inhabitants agreed in saying that it was the traditional vicarage. The church of Bray has not been very much over-restored. The restorations took place a little more than a quarter of a century ago, when ancient buildings were held in much more reverence than they are now. There are some quaint monuments and inscriptions in it, and among others is one of William Goddard, the founder of Jesus Hospital, and his wife.

If what I was thou seekest to knowe
 These lines my character shall showe
 Those benefitts that God me lent
 With thanks I tooke and freely spent
 I scorned what playnesse could not gett
 And next to treasure hated debt
 I loved not those that stirred up strife
 True to my friend and too my wife
 The latter here by me I have
 We had one bed and have one grave
 My honesty was such that I
 When death came feared not to die.

The part of the Thames we are considering is almost a paradise for swans. We meet them at every bend, and many are the quiet nooks for nesting. We learn from the 'Penny Cyclopædia' that, according to an old law, no subject could hold property in swans that were allowed to be at large in a public river or creek, unless he held his right from the Crown, and then for a fee the Crown grants a swan mark, or notches in the bill, to identify the birds; and on the first Monday in August, every year, the swan-markers of the Crown, and some of the London companies, go up the river and practise their cruel calling. The markers are called swan-uppers, which has been corrupted into 'swan-hoppers,' and all unmarked swans belong to the Crown; so that if a bird has been missed, it becomes royal property. This accounts for the immense number belonging to the Queen. By a curious old Act of Parliament the following penalty is enforced against anyone who steals a lawfully marked swan in an open and common river. The swan is to be held by his beak until the tail just touches the ground, and as much wheat is to be poured over the swan as will cover him up to the top of his bill. This is not altogether unlike the way in which muskets were sold to Indians in the palmy days of the Hudson Bay Company. A Bir-

mingham musket, worth about 1*l.* 15*s.*, was placed with its butt on the ground, and as many sable skins, worth about 2*l.* or 3*l.* each, were piled up as reached to its muzzle. It is hardly to be wondered at that in those days the factors, and even clerks, grew rich; yet that Company paid 50 to 60 per cent., besides. On the swan-upping day—which simply means taking up a young swan to mark it—some of the Companies go up the river in barges, and make merry with great good fare while the birds are subject to torture; for they actually bleed at the incisions. If a short Act were passed that a liveryman—only one—should each year have his finger-nail marked just as the swan's bill is, the barbarous custom would pretty soon disappear. Opinions, indeed, may differ as to the improvement, in a picturesque sense, that swans are to the river. Their 'pose' on the water is not so graceful as that of a sheldrake or pintail duck; and the straight long neck rather reminds one of a giraffe: indeed, we never hear words of admiration for this part of the singular creature. For our own taste, a swan has rather a cockney appearance in water; and while water-lilies are the delight of every one, as indeed are willow-bushes, or alders, or anything that is indigenous or natural, swans painfully remind us of an artificial state of things. A swan was the admiration of the vapid artists who used to draw handsome but not intelligent youths playing on a guitar or a flute, in a boat, to the apparent interest of some young damsel: the class of pictures, in fact, that was in vogue a generation since. Rather than another day's swan-hopping, let the birds have their own sweet will, and resume their ancient habits. The strength of the swan is enormous. The blow of his pinion being able to break a leg is an old story; but Stanley relates a circumstance that eclipses this, and the writer was once a witness to an almost similar scene, where swans were carefully kept on a lake into which a little brook emptied itself. A swan had lost some young ones, it is supposed, on a former occasion, through the depredations of a fox, and would seem to have mistrusted the family of foxes generally; and when, surrounded by her infant progeny, she saw one swimming across to where her nest was, she knew very well that on the land her own long neck and the crafty fence of the enemy would place her at a great disadvantage: so she decided on a naval engagement, where the advantages would be all her own; and sailing through the water to meet him, she struck him such powerful blows with her wings that he succumbed at once, and was drifted quite dead to the bank he had left. A few swans are fattened every year at Windsor, but opinions are divided regarding their merit as an article of diet. For myself, I have found a wild one, even when young, equal to a wild duck; and there is no

reason why the fattened domestic ones should not exceed their wild brethren as far as a fattened tame duck does all wild ones, not excepting the Canvas-back or the Blue-winged Teal.

In the reach of the Thames we are now considering, immense numbers of trout have been liberated, but the results have been far from encouraging, as they seem to have fallen an early prey to pike, or perch, or chub. The first on this list is called 'vermin' in America, and it should be hunted out of every fishing stream; for though, if in good season, and well stuffed and baked, it is not a bad fish at all, it does not compensate for the injury it inflicts on other fishes of more value. A very sure way to improve the venture of releasing trout in the Thames would be to let them be well grown before they undertake their travels by water. Plenty of admirers they will find in each of the animal kingdoms, but very few friends indeed; and they will not have been free long before they find that they are in the midst of danger, necessity, and tribulation. Now, let anyone who may have been at Wolfsbrunn, near Heidelberg, remember how trout are raised and reared from the ova till they attain large dimensions, and he will see how easily these excellent fish could be kept under the protection of the keeper until they were better able to hold their own against the enemies that are under the water, who, after all, are the most persistent and insidious. A little longer time to mature would make them able to look better after themselves; and they could not only by their velocity escape from foes, but would themselves reduce the numbers of young fish that when they grew would be their foes. A little water-mill would send up an abundant supply of water to the gravelly spawning-beds, and these might be regulated with the utmost ease to let the fish leave one after another until they have reached half a pound in weight, and then they would rapidly thrive in an open river, and be of more use economically and for exercise than many times the number of coarser fish that they would displace. Any sportsman would rather kill a woodcock than a hare or even a pheasant, though either of these might be thought of greater value in a larder; and so a trout caught with a fly, if he only weighed a pound, would bring a more healthful glow into the frame of a citizen than a basketful of bream or chub caught while sitting in a chair in a broad punt.

ALFRED RIMMER.

(To be continued.)

Archery in Scotland.

'Now let us see your archery.'—*Titus Andronicus*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

THOUGH it has often been hastily assumed that the annals of the Bow in the northern kingdom would require no more space in the writing than did Olaus Magnus's famous chapter on the snakes of Iceland, yet this is only true of archery in battle; and it is a curious fact that, though the Scots could never be induced to take to the bow as a military weapon, they became very fond of archery as a pastime, when firearms took the place of bows and arrows as 'artillery,' and there was no further need for statutes forcing the bow into their hands, and forbidding all outdoor amusements that interfered with its practice. It is a curious problem why, in two races so akin as the English and the Lowland Scots, national bent should in this respect take such opposite directions. While the Southern yeoman delighted in his long-bow and the sheaf of shafts, 'the twelve Scots' lives' he bore under his girdle, his kinsman-foe across the Tweed could never be compelled either by experience or a long series of penal statutes to take to the weapon whose power in skilful hands he had felt on many a bloody field. 'Few of thaim was sekyr of archarie,' laments Blind Harry, the Minstrel of Wallace's followers; and not only was this true of all succeeding Scottish soldiers, but it may be that the same national prejudice can be traced back for centuries before the Blind Minstrel's time, to the days of the sculptured stones that stud the north-eastern districts of Scotland. While on them are many delineations of the hunter aiming his arrow at deer or wild boar, there is only one instance in all their many scenes of war in which fighting men are armed with the bow.

When the first James of Scotland returned to his northern kingdom with his 'fairest English flower,' Lady Jane Beaufort, he brought back with him from his long captivity a deep impression of the value of the bow. Under the careful instruction of the Constable of Pevensey, James had become a fine marksman; and he tried by every means in his power to popularise the exercise at home. He forbade football and other 'unprofitable sports;' he ordered every man to shoot at the bow-marks near his parish church every Sunday; he chose a body-guard for himself from among the most skilful archers at the periodical 'Wappinshaws;' and in his poem of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green' he published a

scathing satire on the clumsiness and inefficiency of his peasantry in archery. What the most energetic of the Stuart kings set his mind to, he generally succeeded in; and possibly, if the dagger of 'that mischant traitour, Robert Grahame,' had spared his life at Perth, James might have done what so many Scottish kings failed to do; as it was, we see signs of improvement among his people. It was in his reign that Charles VII. formed from the survivors of Lord Buchan's Scots the famous Archer-guard of France, familiar to every reader of 'Quentin Durward,' who, 'foreigners though they were, ever proved themselves the most faithful troops in the service of the French crown.'

The body-guard that the author of the 'King's Quhair' embodied for himself was the origin of the famous 'Royal Company of Archers' that still flourishes vigorously in Edinburgh. So say the present 'Bodyguard for Scotland,' though their oldest extant records stop short two centuries and a half of King James's time.

With James's assassination at Perth, the new-born zeal for archery seems to have died away; and it is not till we come to the time of James V. that any noteworthy traces of its practice can be found. If we may judge from a story told in Lindsay of Pit-scottie's quaint old chronicle of Scotland, the Commons' king had some fine archers in his kingdom; for Lindsay tells us how the Scottish marksmen were victorious in what surely must have been the earliest friendly shooting-match between England and Scotland. The occasion of this international match was Henry VIII. sending an embassy with the Garter to his nephew, the young King of Scots, in 1534. 'In this year,' says Pit-scottie, whose spelling we modernise, 'came an English ambassador out of England, called Lord William Howard: a bishop and other gentlemen to the number of three-score horse: who were all able wailed [picked] gentlemen for all kinds of pastimes, as shooting, leaping, wrestling, running, and casting of the stone. But they were well assayed in all these before they went home, and that by their own provocation, and they almost ever tint [lost]; while at the last the king's mother favoured the Englishmen, because she was the King of England's sister; and therefore she took a wager of archery upon the Englishmen's hands, contrary to the king her son, and any half-dozen Scotsmen, either noblemen, gentlemen, or yeomen, that so many Englishmen should shoot against them at 'rovers,' 'butts,' or 'prick-bonnet.' The king hearing of this bonspiel [sporting match] of his mother, was well content. So there was laid a hundred crowns, and a tun of wine pandit [staked] on each side. The ground was chosen in St. Andrews. The Scottish archers were three landed gentlemen and three yeomen; to wit, David Wemyss of that ilk, David

Arnott of that ilk, and Mr. John Wedderburn, Vicar of Dundee. The yeomen were John Thomson in Leith, Steven Tabroner and Alexander Baillie who was a piper. [The Scottish archers] shot wondrous near and won the wager from the Englishmen; and thereafter went into the town, and made a banquet to the king and the queen and the English ambassador, with the whole two hundred crowns and the two tuns of wine.'

Archery from this time became an established pastime in Scotland, amicably sharing men's leisure with its old enemies golf and football, while with the ladies it took rank as their chief, if not only, out-door pastime. Queen Margaret herself might possibly have taken her place with credit beside the six Englishmen she backed in this match against her son; for we are told by Leland and others that Henry's sister was no mean shot, while her unfortunate grandchild Mary Queen of Scots was as fond of archery as was her cousin Elizabeth of England and many another lady of that time. One story of Queen Mary's shooting has often been cited against her since the time Sir William Drury wrote to Mr. Secretary Cecil from St. Andrews telling him how Mary, a fortnight after her husband Darnley's murder in the Kirk O'Fields, had been shooting with Bothwell at the butts of Tranent against Huntly and Seton for a dinner, which the latter pair had to pay. This story Drury soon afterwards found out to be untrue, but, certainly, as much prominence has not been given by many a writer since then to this contradiction as to his original statement.

At schools, as we know from the 'Memoirs of the Sommervilles' and from James Melville's Autobiography, archery was a favourite pastime of the boys. When Melville, who 'by our maister was taught to handle the bow for archery' while at school, went to College at St. Andrew's, he found archery and golf were then the favourite amusements of the gay little university town.

Scottish literature in the early years of the seventeenth century is full of allusions to the pastime. 'Buttis for archery' seem to have been indispensable adjuncts to a gentleman's house; and we find the loyal Town Council of Aberdeen so impressed with this idea that, when it was expected that King James VI. was to visit their town, they voted among their other grants a sum of 10*l.* to erect 'one pair of buttis besyd the Castyll-hill, for serving of His Hieness and the noblemen that is to come heir with his Grace.'

King James V. had presented silver arrows to the royal burghs of Scotland to be competed for twice a year at the 'Weapon Schawings' which his Act of 1540 ordained to be held. None of these sixteenth-century arrows can be proved to be in existence

now, though, as the 'Musselburgh Arrow' has, on the earliest of the medals it is customary for the winner to hang to the trophy as a memorial of his victory, the date 1603, Mr. Balfour Paul is inclined to think it is the sole survivor of the 'Commons' King's' challenge trophies. However this may be, we find the seventeenth-century archers of various good towns keenly competing for their arrows, notwithstanding the frowns of the Reformers and the repressive measures of both ecclesiastical and civil courts. Adamson, the rhyming chronicler of Perth and its worthies, dwells with pride on the

Matchless skill in noble archery
In these our days when archers did abound
In Perth, then famous for such pastimes found ;

and refers to matches with other towns in which the bowmen of the Fair City

Spared neither gains nor pains for to report
To Perth the worship by such noble sport.

The most interesting records of Scottish archery of this period are, however, those we find in Mr. Mark Napier's 'Memoirs of Montrose.' When James Graham, then Earl of Montrose, went to St. Andrew's University in 1627, he was accompanied by a tutor and guardian who was also purse-bearer, and from his careful entries of 'my lord's expenses' Montrose's biographer is enabled to give us a graphic picture of the social life and amusements of the period at the University. Hunting, hawking, horse-racing, billiards, and tennis, all had a vigorous adherent in young Graham, and, says Mr. Napier, 'to those who take interest in ancient sports the fact, hitherto unknown, will be acceptable that a most enthusiastic promoter of those still approved exercises, archery and golf, was the great Montrose. The fact acquires additional interest when compared with a passage in a letter from the Queen of Bohemia, sister of Charles I. In the month of August 1649, twenty-one years later than the period we are now recording, and within a twelvemonth of Montrose's death, while he held a commission as plenipotentiary from Charles II. to the foreign states, her majesty, who had conceived a great affection for him, writes in these terms:—"We have nothing to do but to walk and shoot. I am grown a good archer to shoot with my Lord Kinnoul. If your office will suffer it, I hope you will come and help us to shoot." (This letter was written from Rhenen, the queen's summer residence on the Rhine.) Montrose had retained throughout his life the reputation of a good archer, which, no doubt, he had acquired at the college of St. Andrew's. In the old

college there, three antique silver arrows, with many silver medals attached, are still preserved and exhibited to the curious. The medals are all dated, and bear the name, and generally some armorial insignia, of the prize-holder. . . . Upon one of them there is engraved, underneath the full arms of the earldom, "James Earle of Montroes, 1628," and on the reverse is rudely sculptured the figure of an archer drawing his bow, the usual effigies on most of the ancient medals. Montrose, it seems, held this arrow from 1628 to 1630, by which time, being married, he had left college.'

For many years before this the dominant Puritan party in Scotland had been trying to put down all games. They first succeeded, by vigorously prosecuting all offenders against their new laws, in putting an end to archery and the other pastimes the people were in the habit of indulging in on Sundays; and though King James's famous 'Book of Sports,' in which the British Solomon declared it to be his pleasure 'that after the end of divine service our good people be not discouraged from any lawful recreation, such as dancing, either men or women, archery for men,' compelled them for a time to overlook practices they never ceased to abhor, yet when the days of civil war came, games were unsparingly put down, and in Scotland, as Macaulay says of Puritan England, 'it was a sin to hang garlands on a Maypole, to drink a friend's health, to fly a hawk, to hunt a stag, to play at chess, to wear lovelocks, to put starch into a ruff, to touch the virginals, to read the Fairy Queen.' As in other games there is a blank in the annals of pastime-archery till the Restoration, though it is said that Montrose employed the bow as a weapon in his campaigns. His fondness for it would make this appear likely enough, but for the fact that he relied chiefly on his Highland troops, 'whose mode of fighting was by the impetuous dash with pike and claymore, and had not the steadiness and discipline indispensable to a body of archers.'

Though we find some references to archery meetings in the years succeeding the Restoration, the bowmen do not seem to have taken up their weapons again with the same zest with which golfers resumed their clubs, and it was with a view to stimulate this flagging interest in the ancient sport that the present Royal Company of Archers was revived in 1676, under the presidency of the Marquis of Atholl. We have already alluded to the tradition that would make the Company the lineal descendants of the Archer-guard raised by the first James of Scotland; but whether or not this is founded on fact, there is certainly evidence in the Company's records to show that in one shape or another it existed for some

time previous to the commencement of its present records in 1676.

The first entry in their minute-book tells how, 'the noble and useful recreation of archery being for many years much neglected,' several noblemen and gentlemen associated themselves in a Company for its encouragement. They appointed a goodly list of office-bearers, framed laws for the body, and obtained the approval of the Privy Council, which august body recommended the Treasury to grant the Company 'one prize once in the year to be shot for as a public prize, to be called the King's Prize,' a grant still annually voted by Parliament among the Queen's Plates.

In December 1703 Queen Anne granted a charter to the Company ratifying and confirming their old privileges and prohibiting anyone 'to cause any obstacle or impediment to the said Royal Company in the lawful exercise of the ancient arms of Bows and Arrows,' the Company to render for this yearly to the sovereign 'one pair of barbed arrows, if asked only.' Mr. Balfour Paul, in his 'History of the Royal Company of Archers,' (Blackwood, 1875), tells us that these *Reddendo* arrows have twice been delivered to the sovereign; first to George IV. during his visit to Edinburgh in 1822, and again when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert first came to Scotland in 1842.

From the very beginning the Company had been composed almost entirely of men who had a common tie in their attachment to the Stuarts. Many of the members suffered severely for this in the 'Forty-five,' and for long after then the Government looked with suspicion on the body as a stronghold of devotion to the cause of the exiled house. Mr. Paul prints a letter from Oliphant of Gask in 1777, giving an amusing account of the adventures of his Archer uniform in the Rebellion. 'I lose no time in acquainting you,' writes the Jacobite laird, 'that my archer coat is still preserved. It is pretty odd if my coat be the only one left, especially as it was taken away in the '46 by the Duke of Cumberland's plunderers; and Miss Anne Graeme, Inchbrakie, thinking it would be regretted by me, went boldly out among the soldiers and recovered it from one of them, insisting with him that it was a lady's riding habit; but putting her hand to the breeches to take them too, he, with a thundering oath, asked if the lady wore *breeches*?' This interesting relic is carefully preserved by the Company. There is little of very general interest in the history of the Company for the last century, during which time they have continued steadily to prosper. A curious incident in October 1818, however, deserves notice. A party of North American Indians, who were engaged at the Theatre Royal in the

play of 'La Perouse, or the Desolate Island,' were invited by the Company to visit Archers' Hall and display their skill in archery. At about twelve paces their practice was very good, but at longer distances and at field shooting 'their bows were too weak for the weight of their arrows' and they had no chance with the members of the Royal Company. Mr. Paul gives an interesting account of the Indians' mode of shooting and way of holding the bow, and says that after dinner their chief, through their interpreter, expressed his astonishment 'to find warriors in a country so remote from his own who could exhibit such power and dexterity with the bow and arrow.'

The annals of Scottish archery even within the last hundred years have not always recorded such peaceful and friendly encounters as this. On one occasion, at least, bows have been bent with most bloodthirsty intent. On February 10, 1791, a very ludicrous duel took place at Edinburgh, of which unfortunately only this meagre account is preserved:—'Two gentlemen met on the Meadows, supplied with bows and arrows, to decide a point of honour. They were accompanied by seconds, and had a surgeon in attendance in case their Indian artillery should by any means prove effective. After a harmless exchange of three shots, the parties retired, the point of honour doubtless being satisfactorily arranged. If similar weapons were always employed in duelling,' adds the newspaper reporter, 'this amusement would speedily become unfashionable, seeing that the seconds would run quite as great, if not a greater, risk than the principals.' 'Let us hope,' with Mr. Paul, 'for the honour of the Royal Company, that the two Hectors—we cannot call them "fire-eaters"—did not belong to that respectable and peaceable body.'

The practice of archery in Scotland is now nearly entirely confined to the members of the Body-guard. The Company possess a great number of handsome 'Arrows,' cups and other prizes which are periodically shot for. In these enlightened days, of course, such old competitions as 'The Goose Prize' and the 'Papingo' exist only as names, though in comparatively recent times the archers shot at a live goose 'failled and biggit' (turfed and built) into a butt with nothing but the head visible. 'The sport in all its barbarity,' says Mr. Paul, 'seems to have been kept up a considerable time, as it is only about 1764 that we find the item of "half-a-crown for a goose" omitted from the treasurer's accounts. The method now adopted for shooting for the prize of the Goose is by inserting a small glass globe of about an inch in diameter in the centre of the butt mark, which is a circular piece of card-board four inches in diameter. The competitor whose arrow first

breaks this globe is declared "Captain of the Goose" for the year.' The Goose medal is made of part of the very coins paid by Tippoo Sultan to the allies at the treaty of Seringapatam in 1792.

The 'Papingo'—'the trembling mark at which their arrows fly' of the funeral games of Patroclus in the Iliad—was in early times a milk-white dove tied to the top of a pole, or, as at Kilwinning, to the steeple of their abbey church; then a wooden or stuffed bird, like the one Scott refers to in 'Old Mortality.' Now it is shot for in the butts like an ordinary butt prize.

ROBERT MACGREGOR.

A Dreadful Case.

I.

I THOUGHT it was very good of Messrs. Buckram and Blake to tell me on my sixtieth birthday that they did not believe in working a willing horse to death, and that therefore they had decided to allow me to retire from their service on two-thirds of my salary. I had been with them altogether five-and-forty years, and it seemed but yesterday that I was appointed their chief clerk, having two subordinates; but full twenty years had passed since then. Now I had a staff of fifteen clerks under me, and my salary of four hundred pounds per annum will give you some little idea of the responsibility attached to my position. I cannot think for a moment that that unfortunate error of mine a week or two before they invited me to retire—I mean, my sending a rather stern application for payment to the wrong parties—had anything at all to do with this event. True, when the blunder was discovered, Mr. Blake said, with a severity which was really quite uncalled for, ‘Your memory is not what it used to be, Frogg’; but men who thought poorly of the ability of their chief clerk would scarcely on his retirement have made him a present for his wife of a neat little silver tea-service, ‘As a trifling tribute’ (so ran the inscription on the tea-pot) ‘to his long and faithful labours’—would they, now? No. I flatter myself that I could have done justice to Buckram and Blake for another ten years and more. However, I was by no means loath to be completely master of my own time at an age when I was still, as Mr. Harry Blake Buckram said, in his funny way, ‘a dashing old youngster.’ Gardening (window-gardening, that is to say) had long been with me a passion. Yet Claremont Square, Pentonville, afforded far too little scope for my horticultural genius. I do not refer to the square itself, but to the window-sills of the four rooms at No. 45 that my wife and I had occupied for many, many years. Here at length was an opportunity, in the large garden of some picturesque suburban villa, for the full development of those powers which had hitherto been exercised after six o’clock in the evening on window-flowers, and that in a very fitful way. Geraniums in perennial pots might now yield to geraniums in beds. Perhaps, too (stranger things have happened in history), the name even of a humble city clerk might be handed down to posterity, and the *Froggei* variety

of geraniums flourish in a thousand gardens generations after poor old Frogg himself was dead and gone !

I confess that with these dreams of the future which crowded my brain on my way home, was mingled a feeling of shame at the thought of the vexation I had shown that very morning on learning that a tenant of mine intended next quarter-day to give up the cottage which he occupied at Dulwich. Why, as it had happened, nothing could suit me better. Of the house itself I had certainly never thought very highly. It was simply a rather poor specimen of modern Building Society Gothic semi-detached, as they call it. The party-wall which separated my own from its companion house was a marvel of tenuity. That wall had evidently been built for the sole purpose of promoting a feeling of neighbourliness ; since friendly conversation between the inhabitants of the two dwellings was quite practicable through it ; and scandal was checked, thank heaven ! by the fact that it could easily be overheard. But there was one advantage which my property possessed which to me was unmixed ; namely, that a large plot of garden-ground was attached thereto ; in none the worse condition, to my mind, because the present occupant of 'Marie Villa' (named after my wife Polly, by the way) had no soul for gardening, and had allowed it to become overgrown with weeds. For, beginning my career as a practical horticulturist under such circumstances, the triumph over Nature which I fondly anticipated would be entirely my own. In years to come I could proudly say, 'I found a wilderness : I leave the *Froggei* variety of geranium in glorious profusion !'

Well, to avoid verbosity—which is the bane of age—I will just state at once that the autumn following my retirement from the service of Buckram and Blake found me fully established as a gentleman-gardener. It was the noon of a dull September day. The man whom I employed to dig up the ground, and do the rougher work generally, had just laid down his spade and gone to dinner. My maxim is—as it was when I was Buckram's chief clerk—'Never be seen idle by a subordinate ;' so it was not until the gardener's back was turned that I put my pruning-knife in my pocket, yawned lazily, filled my old briar-root pipe, and prepared to look around reflectively. What a strange contrast was the scene around to that which daily greeted my eyes year after year from the top of the Islington 'bus ! Thank God ! the harsh clatter of the mill of commerce had not become such music to my ears that I could not enjoy the sombre calm of such a day as this. Above was a waste of pale grey sky ; a mist hung upon the skirts of the meadows—in that light, a deep soothing green—which stretched towards Dulwich College and the Crystal Palace ; and in

a neighbouring field chestnut-trees, whose leaves were reddening with the decay of autumn, relieved the dulness of the slaty clouds. O to live amid such scenes until I dropped from the tree of life as gently as those decaying leaves! O to find, perhaps, my views about the Froggei geranium appreciated by genial neighbours!

‘If you please, sir, the mistress says as they’ve come.’

The owner of the voice which thus interrupted my meditations at a most interesting stage was that very worthy woman Ann Lightbody, our middle-aged servant-maid.

‘Ah!’ I exclaimed, somewhat vacantly; the influence of the thoughts which had just been passing through my mind conspiring with Ann’s vague statement to prevent a more expressive response.

‘The mistress can’t make ’em out a bit, and she have her doubts, sir.’

This satisfactory addition to my information was made while Ann held open the French window of the drawing-room, in order to allow me to pass into the house.

‘You mean that *you* have your doubts, Ann,’ said I, ‘and that your mistress did not contradict you.’

‘Well, sir, the Pantegon man’s at the door, and you can see for yourself. Such a ’eap of lumber I never see, in all my exper’ence.’

The drift of Ann’s critical remarks began to be plain to me. We had been expecting fresh tenants of the adjoining house for some days, and now they were moving in.

‘I cannot think he is a gentleman,’ said my wife, as I approached the front window to inspect the ‘lumber,’ as Ann called it. ‘I do hope there are no children,’ she added, evidently feeling that the offspring of a man who was not a gentleman must necessarily be ill-mannered and unruly.

The person to whom she referred—clearly, judging by his actions, the owner of the van’s contents—was leaning against the railings of the next house, and from time to time cautioning the men—very much to their annoyance, I thought—as to their way of carrying in the goods. He was a tall, sallow man, with a thick but closely cropped beard, and a long ferocious moustache. His hands were in the pockets of a rather seedy blue serge jacket, and on his head was a wideawake that had evidently suffered very much from the rain. A short clay pipe, black with long service, gave the finishing touch to the disreputable appearance which he presented. My wife’s opinion, that he was not a gentleman, seemed not altogether so groundless as I should have imagined. Discernment of character is not one of her strong points.

It was this that made me pause before replying to her comment on our neighbour, for I knew from long experience that she would feel so flattered by my agreeing with her judgment that her imagination would soon get quite beyond control; and this tall sallow man, in addition to being not genteel, would rapidly reach, in my wife's estimation, yet more distinguished positions in crime. In a week he would be a possible forger; in ten days a probable murderer.

Ah! little did I think when these thoughts were passing through my mind that very shortly I, Joram Frogg, the experienced, cool-brained commercial man, should deem my wife's most extravagant speculation a strong probability.

'What do *you* think, Joram dear?' she inquired anxiously.

'I have not made up my mind.'

'I wish we had never left Claremont Square,' exclaimed my poor wife; of course interpreting my hesitation unfavourably to our neighbour. 'There now! I have been watching every single thing that has been taken out of the van, and there is not a shrub, nor a plant, nor a garden tool among them. And how you have talked, to be sure, about nice neighbours who had a taste for flowers!'

My heart sank as I reflected on the latter part of my wife's remarks. The feeling of repulsion I experienced on seeing that tall, carelessly-attired man, was intensified when I realised that I dare not hope for neighbourly sympathy with the taste which had mainly induced me to live in Dulwich. Neither Polly nor myself were happy when we retired to rest that night, separated from an unsatisfactory neighbour by the thinnest of walls!

II.

A NOVEMBER morning. The rime upon tree and shrub and the hard bare earth is slowly yielding to the rays of a winter sun. I, Joram Frogg, a frozen-out gardener, have come out into the air to enjoy the sudden burst of warmth, and to watch the glistening icicles change to dew-drops, as it were, and sparkle, each one, with the glory of the rainbow.

There is more to be done, however, than simply enjoying the unwonted sunlight. The easy life I have spent during the last month or two has, notwithstanding my energetic gardening, begun to affect me in a very disagreeable and unexpected manner. I have been getting fat! But I flatter myself that I have peculiar talent for meeting and overcoming difficulties of every kind. The heavy garden-roller which I bought on entering Marie Vill-

would have lain by, gathering the rust of idleness, during the winter months, had not the happy idea entered my brain of employing it in the interests of health. Consequently, every morning, be it wet or be it dry, sees me, for at least half-an-hour, manfully trotting round the trim gravel paths of my flowery domain, with the garden roller behind me.

Crunch, crunch, crunch—tramp, tramp, tramp. The perspiration stood upon my brow in beads as I gave myself to my laborious task this sunny morning. I had made half-a-dozen circuits of the garden with my eyes bent upon the path before me, when the sound of a voice, trembling as with age, caused me to stop and look towards our neighbour's garden.

'Hi! Good morning to you, sir.'

'Good morning, sir,' I replied, howing to the elderly, infirm-looking man who greeted me.

He had a long beard of snowy whiteness, save round his mouth, where it was jet black. His eyebrows, also, were of the same hue. This contrast alone gave him a very singular look; but the addition of a huge seal-skin cap, with great flaps covering his ears, and a long rough Ulster coat, the collar of which was turned up, would have made his appearance comical in the extreme, save that the soft, almost beseeching expression of his dark eyes forbade the thought.

This old man, plainly an invalid, with a tendency to limpness, had arrived in a cab along with our suspicious neighbour's wife towards the close of the day on which the house was tenanted. This was the first time, to my knowledge, that he had stirred out of doors since then.

He coughed violently for about a minute, and then said, as he wiped the moisture from his eyes:

'You are a very young man, sir; and a rather lively young man, sir.'

'Sixty-one next birthday, sir,' I answered, with all the boastfulness of youth.

'Bless my soul, sir! Three years younger than I am: but you have led a very quiet life, I suppose; and I have become sapless by long exposure to a tropical sun.'

'A traveller, sir?'

'Forty thousand miles in India and Persia.'

'Deary me, sir; deary me!'

'But I have made money by it,' he said, chuckling feebly.

I do not know whether it was the whispered tone in which he uttered these last words, or the vacant look in his eyes, but I began to feel that a tropical sun had enfeebled my new acquaint-

ance mentally as well as physically. I had no opportunity, however, for testing this suspicion of mine, for just then a stout-built, moon-faced German servant, whom our neighbours had brought with them, came from the house, and approached the old gentleman. He submitted to take the arm which the maid silently proffered him, and he led indoors like an offending child.

A week passed before I again had a chance of meeting our old neighbour. Every morning I had prolonged my garden-roller exercise in the hope of seeing him. My good wife suggested that his nephew (she was indebted to the thinness of the walls, by the way, for her knowledge of this relationship) had some sinister motive for preventing intercourse between us. I chid her at the time for her malevolent thoughts, and she was huffed: so there the matter dropped.

I fancied, though, that old Mr. Lea (another fact revealed by the walls) displayed, as it were, something of the spirit of an emancipated schoolboy as he greeted me. The first half-hour of our chat was delightfully pleasant. I talked of flowers; he of the adventures he had met during the years of his foreign travel. He further showed a generous admiration for my 'tasteful arrangement'—the words were his own—of phloxes, asters, and chrysanthemums, and sympathised with my ambition to associate the name of Frogg with that ever-cheerful favourite of both rich and poor, my much-loved geranium. But he did not profess to understand those delicate distinctions in flower and leaf which mean so much to the English florist.

'Nature delights to work on a bolder scale in those regions where I have been most familiar with her,' he said; 'and amid the overpowering magnificence of tropical scenery, the quiet beauties of an English garden would solicit us in vain.'

These words were uttered in a gentle, thoughtful way, that impressed me very much.

'But still, sir, you can feel the beauty of our simple floral gems in their proper place?'

'Gems!' he exclaimed, the expression of his countenance changing from that of the reflective sage, I was going to say, to one that was almost miserly: 'Ah, now you talk of something I understand.—They are not watching us, are they?' he broke off, looking nervously in the direction of the house.

'No, no,' said I with subdued excitement, wondering what was to happen next.

He deliberately unbuttoned his long Ulster coat, shivering in the cold winter air as he did so; then he began to fumble at a

belt which he wore. Several diamonds, of great value as I judged, in a moment more sparkled before my astonished eyes. He had apparently drawn them from a little leather pocket, curiously concealed beneath this belt.

'Ah! those *are* gems, if you like, sir,' he exclaimed with an exulting chuckle, which brought to my mind the impression created at our first interview, that he was not quite right in his head.

'They are splendid,' I said; 'but why do you carry them about with you? Suppose anyone, dishonestly inclined, were to learn that an elderly man had property of such value upon him! The thought of it makes me tremble, sir.'

'I am not in the habit of exhibiting the treasures which it has taken my lifetime to amass. I dare not. But I trust you, sir.'

As a man of business, I thought there was here another proof of mental weakness, in the fact that he should confide in one of whose antecedents he knew nothing, and of whose honesty he had no further proof than a love of nature might suggest.

But I chanced at this moment to look up at the first-floor window of our neighbour's house; and there, watching with a strange and, as I thought, scornful smile, stood the tall, sallow man of whom both my wife's and my own impression was so distinctly unfavourable.

I motioned to the old man to put away his jewels, for the German servant was approaching again; most likely sent by her master.

My strange acquaintance did not appear in the garden any more.

III.

I HAVE an innate horror of eavesdropping; and, as I have repeatedly said to my dear wife, whose feminine curiosity tempts her to attach far too little attention to this evil, 'Conversation not intended for her ears ought to be regarded with the same feelings as a letter not written for her perusal. She would feel deeply insulted did anyone suggest that she was capable of reading another person's letter simply because the seal happened to be broken, and she could therefore do so without fear of detection.' But women, alas, are never logical; and she will not see, or, perhaps, cannot, that her conduct is no less culpable when she greedily listens to the private conversation of others, just because accident, or carelessness, on their part has placed her within ear-

shot. I know I have jested about the thinness of the wall between us and our neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Malden, permitting friendly talk or checking scandal, &c.; but, in sober earnest, I was annoyed with Mrs. Frogg that what was to me a subject for fun was to her a serious and practical means of picking up information concerning the tall man and his wife, and that strange being, Mr. Lea.

Well, a few days after my interview with the latter, we sat in our cheerful, cozy front parlour (I hate that word 'drawing-room' when applied to an apartment sixteen feet square); we were sitting, I say, in our cozy parlour; my wife, with her knitting in her hands, on an ottoman, which was drawn close into a recess by the fireplace; I, in my good old armchair, by the table in the middle of the room, and reading the last number of the 'Gardener's Magazine.' The entrance of Ann, with our customary 'nightcap' of weak toddy and thin bread and butter, interrupted my study of an article on 'Trenching,' and caused me to look up at my wife.

'Eavesdropping!' I was about to exclaim, when my speech was arrested by observing the strange look of horror on Polly's face. She had dropped her knitting, and sat with hands clasped tightly across her breast, and head pressed closely against the wall.

'My dear girl, whatever is the matter with you?' I said.

'Oh! it is dreadful,' she whispered, holding up her finger to check me. 'Pray come and hear what they are saying.'

Exalted though my principles were about listening, I could not resist the impulse of the moment, but hastily rose from my seat and placed my ear against the wall likewise. Ann Lightbody, too, forgetting our relative positions, dropped the tray of toddy on the table as if it were a hot coal, and rushed to the opposite side of the mantelpiece to imitate our example. To anyone entering the room at that moment, the scene presented must have been absurd beyond description. But we were earnest enough, for what we heard seemed to freeze our very blood.

'Is he dead yet?' we heard Mrs. Malden ask her husband, with a low musical laugh that seemed to us like the mirth of a fiend.

'Thoroughly,' responded he in a deep voice, which betrayed no sign of remorse or agitation; 'your hint, that I should dispose of him in his sleep, like Hamlet's uncle did his troublesome brother, was capital.'

'O the wretch!' exclaimed Ann Lightbody at this point, in a tone so loud that I felt sure it would be heard through the wall and cause this dreadful man and his wife to cease their dialogue.

In the excitement of the moment I forgot myself, and I shook my fist at the stupid servant. 'Hold your tongue, woman!' I said in a hoarse whisper.

She obeyed, and at the same time motioned towards my wife, who began to show a tendency to go off into screaming hysterics.

I shook her thoroughly and whispered, 'For heaven's sake, Polly, do command yourself, or we shall hear nothing more.'

The possibility of such a disaster seemed to be a sufficient restorative; and though she trembled violently, she controlled the hysterics, and again we bent our ears to listen.

There was silence for several minutes. Then we heard Mrs. Malden ask gravely:

'What shall you do with the body?'

'Oh, that is just the difficulty. As the neighbours must not have their suspicions roused, it must be buried at night and a report put about that the silly old man has gone into the country.'

• 'Oh, dear! there is the property to dispose of, is there not?'

I felt paralysed with horror to think that a young and beautiful woman could talk with such cynical calmness of disposing of the property of a man who had been done to death by her own husband! I had only seen her once or twice, and if my reading had not told me that the fairest form may sometimes be tenanted by the foulest spirit, I should have thought it utterly impossible for one so lovely to participate in the awful deed they were discussing, or for those tender lips of hers to frame such a speech as the last one. All this flashed through my mind in an instant, and I listened fearfully for her husband's reply. It was what I expected.

'Uncut diamonds tell no tale,' said this sallow neighbour of mine in his deep voice, laughing loudly. 'Nothing could have been luckier than my witnessing that little scene between my uncle and our fat neighbour over the garden wall.'

In an ordinary moment I should have felt keenly the insult conveyed in this remark, but my feelings were too highly wrought for it to touch me then.

But Polly pressed my hand, and murmured, 'The horrid villain!'

We listened painfully for several minutes more. We heard Malden's wife heave a deep sigh. She was human, then. I had scarcely thought it.

'I can't bear to think—it is too dreadful,' she said, her voice trembling for the first time during the fearful conversation.

Again her husband laughed loudly, and said in a theatrical

tone, 'What, my Lady Macbeth trembling! "Come, we'll to sleep. We are yet but young in deed."'

In a moment more we heard the door of the apartment closed. We three sat and looked at each other—blanched and speechless with horror.

IV.

ANN was the first to recover her presence of mind. 'Shall I go an' fetch the perlese, sir?' she said in a subdued voice.

'Oh, don't leave me, Ann!' sobbed my poor wife, yielding to her pent-up emotions and clasping our servant round the waist. This was the first time in her life that she had been so undignified.

'You go, Joram,' she continued. Then a sudden fear seized her. 'But we shall both be murdered while you are gone. Oh, why did I leave Claremont Square?—we did have respectable neighbours there.' The poor soul wrung her hands and began to laugh hysterically.

I felt that everything depended upon my controlling my nervous system. Polly was beginning to get silly, and Ann might at any moment break down too. I took out my pipe, and slowly filled and lit it, in order both to steady myself and to impress these women with my self-command.

'I'll telegraph to Chittick—that will be best,' I said, after pacing the room once or twice.

'You can't telegraph to-night, sir; the office 'ull be shut,' said the practical Ann.

Mr. Chittick was an inspector in the detective force at Scotland Yard. Several years back Messrs. Buckram and Blake were the victims of a forgery, and Inspector Chittick impressed me very much at the time with his sagacity and cool methodical style of investigating the crime. A feeling of friendship between us sprang out of this business; why, it is impossible to say, since the whole current of our lives—our tastes, our pastimes—differed widely: but I simply state a fact. The fact was a source of great satisfaction to me under the present trying circumstances. The Inspector would, I felt sure, lose no time in reaching Dulwich on the receipt of my telegram, and would spare all unnecessary distress to Polly and myself as he proceeded to take the requisite steps for arresting Malden and his wife.

After some internal debating, I decided that it would be better to wait till the morning and then telegraph than to go off to the local police station that night. I have often since wondered at

my courage and calmness. The wife and servant seemed to catch something of my spirit. We were unanimous that to go to bed was impossible; so Mrs. Frogg lay on the sofa, Ann in a sofa-chair which we wheeled out of the next room, and I sat up in my good arm-chair prepared to watch the night through. By dint of a little coaxing I persuaded the two women each to take a stiff glass of whisky-and-water, into which I had slyly dropped a very little laudanum, so that sleep might soothe the terrors of that awful night.

I sat and sat and sat, perplexed and sorrowful. That the savage should kill his fellow-man I could understand, but that a beautiful cultured woman and an intellectual man—for Ernest Malden was that, I judged—should brutally slay a gentle old creature like Mr. Lea, with one foot already in the grave, made me shudder, did I say?—nay, made me wonder on what dark foundation of guilt human nature rested. I had read of murders and thought them shocking; for a moment or two—until I got to the next article in the newspaper. But now the thing seemed brought so close—a murdered man lying but a few yards from me, and his murderer sleeping, as far as I knew, nearer to him than I—that I felt simply baffled as I contemplated the problem such a foul tragedy suggested.

Happily, nothing transpired during that tedious night to create further alarm. In the morning, when the postman called, I got him to take a telegraphic message, which simply urged my friend the Inspector to come as early in the day as he possibly could, as I wanted to see him on business of a very pressing and extraordinary character.

About noon he came. Not a soul had stirred from the neighbouring house, and I had therefore the satisfaction of feeling that the delay would not frustrate the ends of justice. The Inspector was a very cheerful fellow; in appearance and build a well-to-do country gentleman. He complimented my wife on her youth as he greeted her; said he envied me for a lazy old dog; and then, with a sudden change to the character of the keen man of business, frugal of his time, inquired what was the meaning of my urgent message. As a precautionary measure, I requested Polly to leave the room; since I knew, from long experience of her nature, she would be sure to break in upon our conversation with sighs and exclamations did she remain.

When we were alone, I told the story of Mr. Lea's eccentric conduct; his disappearance after his nephew had seen him showing me the diamonds in the garden; and, finally, the strange conversation we had overheard the night before. At first my

friend was merely politely attentive ; but, as I went on, he took out his note-book and carefully wrote down the words we had overheard. He asked for particulars, too, of the appearance of Malden and his wife, and of the murdered man.

‘Do you know anything of the business or profession of Malden?’ he then asked.

I could only admit that on this point I was entirely in the dark.

‘But has not your maid learnt anything on this subject from your neighbour’s servant?’ he inquired; ‘servants are always gossiping, you know.’

‘The woman next door is a foreigner—a German—I think.’

Inspector Chittick pursed up his mouth and tapped his note-book with his pencil.

‘That looks like a plan,’ he remarked, after a moment’s meditation. ‘That fact is the strongest point in the case. It seems as though it were designed that nothing should transpire through the chatter of servants.’

‘Yet surely the real point is the confession of murder which we overheard?’ I urged deferentially.

‘That has to be proved,’ he replied. ‘In the meanwhile, I must compliment you on your shrewdness in sending for me in this quiet way. I shall at once telegraph for one of our men, to stay with you here; and for another, to be posted within a convenient distance of the house. As soon as they arrive I shall go and find out something about the antecedents of this Mr. Malden; that is, if you can tell me the name of the person who conveyed his furniture here.’

Fortunately I could do this. Mr. Chittick duly noted the fact, and then closed his note-book, wrote out the telegram on a form which he had with him, and sent Ann without delay to the post-office; cautioning her not to say a word to anyone about the affair of the previous night.

When she was gone, he resumed the character of the country gentleman by asking me how I liked my present life, and what progress I was making in gardening.

I was amazed at his coolness. ‘How on earth, Mr. Chittick, can you talk of such things when there is a murdered man next door?’

‘If the poor old chap is dead,’ he answered, ‘there is no occasion for hurry; and I cannot bring his murderer to justice by looking and speaking in a very important fashion at the present moment. Besides, I always avoid getting into an official habit, and this I find I can best do by dismissing a case completely from

my mind whenever I reach a point where nothing further can be done for the time being. Excuse me if I have wounded your feelings by my conduct. I know this case has been a terrible ordeal for you and your poor wife, but I am only too accustomed to such things, unfortunately.'

The intelligence and strength of character which these remarks suggested, easily explained why Inspector Chittick was held to be so far above the ordinary run of detective; and, further, made me reluctant to inquire, as I intended doing, 'his reason for not arresting Malden there and then. Was it possible that his keen eye saw a weak link in the chain of testimony I had placed before him? 'Ah! Joram Frogg, there is more in heaven and earth and the Criminal Investigation Department than is dreamt of in *your* philosophy,' I kept saying to myself, until the morning crept slowly away, and Inspector Chittick left.

Day after day passed, and nothing transpired to clear up this mystery. Several times Malden left the house for a few hours, and we then observed that the detective officer who lounged about the road followed him at a little distance. Once Ann burst into the room with the startling intelligence that there was a great noise of shovelling in the adjoining house in the vicinity of the coal-cellar. Our resident detective, who was a grim, taciturn man—the very reverse of his chief—uttered the words 'Burying him,' and quietly went to our coal-cellar to listen, leaving us in a state of the wildest agitation. At length, after an interval of nearly a fortnight, we had, for the first time, a communication from Inspector Chittick in the shape of a telegram:—

'I have made an unexpected and startling discovery in re Malden. I will call this afternoon, and hope to do business. Malden is at home; intends leaving town to-morrow morning with wife and German servant.'

I did not show this message to Polly, for I knew it would upset her. She was nearly broken down already with the suspense of the last week or two, and that fool of a woman, Ann Lightbody, kept priming her with horrors until the very sound of my own footstep was a terror to her—Fancy that! My nerves, too, were a little unstrung, and I actually trembled when Ann ushered Mr. Chittick into the front room. He looked as solemn as the officer who had been living with us, and after greeting me, he gravely took a newspaper from his pocket and passed it to me.

'Read that,' he said, pointing to a portion marked at top and

bottom with ink. In a mechanical fashion I took the paper and began to read. It was part of an article on the 'Magazines of the Month,' and *Tyburnia* was the periodical the criticism of which he had marked. I read :

'*Tyburnia*, as usual, is very strong in fiction. But it scarcely sustains its reputation by inserting the highly melodramatic tale, "The Cap of Midas." The hero-villain of this story is a young Greek who is assistant to an aged diamond-merchant in Syracuse.'

My heart began to beat as I read the last few words.

'This young gentleman is fired by an ambition to play an important part in the political life of the coming Greek federation. To obtain wealth, and with it influence, he murders his aged master for the sake of certain priceless gems which the old fellow has concealed in a velvet nightcap he is in the habit of wearing. This is the cap of Midas, we presume. Justin Corgialeagno—the murderer—had read "Hamlet" (Query. Has "Hamlet" been translated into modern Greek yet?) and drops poison into his master's ear, and steals the nightcap. This poison, however, fails to do its work, so the assistant at once stabs the old man, and begins to feel the first difficulties of his lot, namely, how to dispose of the body of the murdered man.'

I looked up at Inspector Chittick sheepishly. A mocking smile lurked in the corners of his mouth, I thought.

'Well, the hero buries his master in the garden of his house, and starts off with this cap which contains the wealth that is to give him political power. Here comes the melodramatic point of the story. The diamonds in this cap are of such enormous value that the murderer dare not attempt to sell them, feeling sure that inquiries will be made as to how he became possessed of such precious gems. Tortured by fear and desperate with hunger, he at length commits suicide with this cap of Midas placed mockingly upon his own head. The story is ingenious in some of its parts, but is really, to speak plainly, unworthy of the reputation of that promising young novelist, Mr. Ernest Malden.'

'Mr. Ernest Malden,' I muttered vacantly, 'a—a novelist!'

The Inspector rose from his chair and slapped me on the back, and poked me in the ribs, and shook me by the shoulders, laughing the while with such tremendous boisterousness, that Mrs. Frogg and Ann burst into the room in a state of speechless amazement which I shall never forget. Their appearance gave just the finishing touch of absurdity to the situation; and as the grotesqueness of the blunder which we had one and all made dawned upon me I, too, began to laugh until the tears rolled down my cheeks.

‘Polly!’ I gasped, as soon as I could speak, ‘Mr. Malden is a novelist! and oh, such a vile murderer—*on paper*! Ha, ha, ha! oh, oh, oh! he, he! oh! ha, ha, ha, ha!’

We really never saw poor old Mr. Lea again, for he died at Brighton of softening of the brain a few weeks after his nephew and niece joined him. Their leaving town—referred to in the Inspector’s telegram—was with this object. The old gentleman, as we afterwards learned, was taken away from next door in a cab one evening when we must all have been at the back of the house. Had we but seen him go, we should have been spared a great deal of terror, and many unjust suspicions of our neighbours’ characters. Yet, on the other hand, this tale would never have been written, and I should have lost an opportunity, to say the least, of opening my heart to a sympathetic Public about the *Froggi* variety of geranium. The ‘variety’ will be a reality ere long—be it known to all men.

WILLIAM JAMESON.

The Dying Trees in Kensington Gardens.

A GREAT many trees have lately been cut down in Kensington Gardens, and the subject was brought before the House of Commons at the latter part of its last session. In reply to Mr. Ritchie's question Mr. Adam, the then First Commissioner of Works, made explanations which, so far as they go, are satisfactory,—but the distance is very small. He states that all who have watched the trees must have seen that their decay 'has become rapid and decided in the last two years,' that when the vote for the parks came on many 'were either dead or hopelessly dying,' that in the more thickly planted portions of the gardens the trees were dead and dying by hundreds, owing to the impoverished soil and the terrible neglect of timely thinning fifty or sixty years ago.

Knowing the sensitiveness of the public regarding tree-cutting, Mr. Adam obtained the co-operation of a committee of experts, consisting of Sir Joseph Hooker, Mr. Clutton, and Mr. Thomas, 'so distinguished as a landscape gardener,' and the late First Commissioner of Works. They had several meetings, and, as Mr. Adam informs us, 'the result has been a unanimous resolution, that we ought to proceed at once to clear away the dead and dying trees.' This is being done to the extent of 'an absolute clearance' in some places, and the removal of numerous trees all over the gardens. We are further told that 'the spaces cleared will either be trenched, drained, and replanted, or will be left open, as may appear best.' Mr. Adam adds that 'the utmost care is being used in the work; that not a tree is being cut that can properly be spared; and that every effort will be made to restore life to the distinguished trees that are dying.'

I have watched the proceedings in Kensington Gardens and also in Bushey Park, and have considerable difficulty in describing the agricultural vandalism that I have witnessed, and expressing my opinion of it, without transgressing the bounds of conventional courtesy towards those who are responsible. I do not refer to the cutting down of the dead and dying trees, but to the proceedings by which they have been officially and artificially killed by those who ought to possess sufficient knowledge of agricultural chemistry to understand the necessary consequences of their conduct.

About forty years have elapsed since Liebig taught to all who were able and willing to learn that trees and other vegetables are composed of two classes of material: 1st, the carbon and elements

of water derived from air and rain; and 2nd, the nitrogenous and incombustible saline compounds derived from the soil. The possible atmospheric origin of some of the nitrogen is still under debate, but there is no doubt that all which remains behind as incombustible ash, when we burn a leaf, is so much matter taken out of the soil. Every scientific agriculturist knows that certain crops take away certain constituents from the soil, and that if this particular cropping continues without a replacing of those particular constituents of fertility, the soil must become barren in reference to the crop in question, though other crops demanding different food may still grow upon it.

The agricultural vandalism that I have watched with so much vexation is the practice of annually raking and sweeping together the fallen leaves, collecting them in barrows and carts, and then carrying them quite away from the soil in which the trees are growing, or should grow. I have inquired of the men thus employed whether they put anything on the ground to replace these leaves, and they have not merely replied in the negative, but have been evidently surprised at such a question being asked. What is finally done with the leaves I do not know: they may be used for the flower-beds or sold to outside florists. I have seen a large heap accumulated near to the Round Pond.

Now, the leaves of forest trees are just those portions containing the largest proportion of ash; or, otherwise stated, they do the most in exhausting the soil. In Epping Forest, in the New Forest, and other forests where there has been still more 'terrible neglect of timely thinning,' the trees continue to grow vigorously, and have thus grown for centuries; the leaves fall on the soil wherein the trees grow, and thus continually return to it all they have taken away.

They do something besides this. During the winter they gradually decay. This decay is a process of slow combustion, giving out just as much heat as though all the leaves were gathered together and used as fuel for a bonfire; but the heat in the course of natural decay is gradually given out just when and where it is wanted, and the coating of leaves, moreover, forms a protecting winter jacket to the soil.

I am aware that the plea for this sweeping-up of leaves is the demand for tidiness; that people with thin shoes might wet their feet if they walked through a stratum of fallen leaves. The reply to this is, that all reasonable demands of this class would be satisfied by clearing the footpaths, from which nobody should deviate *in the winter time*. Before the season for strolling in the grass returns, Nature will have disposed of the fallen leaves. A

partial remedy may be applied by burning the leaves, then carefully distributing their ashes; but this is after all a clumsy imitation of the natural slow combustion above described, and is wasteful of the ammoniacal salts as well as of the heat. The Avenues of Bushey Park are not going so rapidly as the old sylvan glories of Kensington Gardens, though the same robbery of the soil is practised in both places. I have a theory of my own in explanation of the difference, viz., that the cloud of dust that may be seen blowing from the roadway as the vehicles drive along the Chestnut Avenue settles down on one side or the other and supplies material which to some extent, but not sufficiently, compensates for the leaf robbery.

The First Commissioner speaks of efforts being made to restore life to the distinguished trees that are dying. Let us hope that these include a restoration to the soil of those particular salts that have for some years past been annually carted away from it in the form of dead leaves, and that this is being done not only around the 'distinguished' trees, but throughout the gardens.

Any competent analytical chemist may supply Mr. Adam with a statement of what are these particular salts. This information is obtainable by simply burning an average sample of the leaves, and analysing their ashes.

While on this subject I may add a few words on another that is closely connected with it. In some parts of the parks, gardeners may be seen more or less energetically occupied in pushing and pulling effective mowing-machines, and carrying away the grass which is thus cut. This produces the justly admired result of a beautiful velvet lawn; but unless this continuous exhaustion of the soil is compensated, a few years of such cropping will starve it. This subject is now so well understood by all educated gardeners, that I cannot suppose it to be overlooked in our parks, as it so frequently is in domestic gardening. Many a lawn that a few years ago was the pride of its owner is now becoming as bald as the head of the faithful, 'practical,' and obstinate old gardener who so heartily despises the 'fads' of scientific theorists.

When natural mowing-machines are used, i.e. cattle and sheep, their droppings restore all that they take away from the soil, minus the salts contained in their own flesh, or the milk that may be removed. An interesting problem has been for some time past under the consideration of the more scientific of the Swiss agriculturists. From the mountain pasturages only milk is taken away, but this milk contains a certain quantity of phosphates, the restoration of which must be effected sooner or later, or the produce

will be cut off, especially now that so much condensed milk is exported.

The West India Islands have already suffered to a very serious extent on account of the former ignorance of the sugar-planters, who used the canes as fuel in boiling down the syrup, and allowed the ashes of those canes to be washed down into the sea. They were ignorant of the fact that pure sugar may be taken away in unlimited quantities without any impoverishment of the land, seeing that it is composed merely of carbon and the elements of water, all derivable from air and rain. All that is needed to maintain the perennial fertility of a sugar-plantation is to restore the stems and leaves of the cane, or carefully to distribute their ashes. The relation of these to the soil of the sugar-plantations is precisely the same as that of the leaves of the trees to the soil of Kensington Gardens, and the reckless removal of either must produce the same disastrous consequences.

W. MATTIEU WILLIAMS.

A Romance of the Nineteenth Century.

BY W. H. MALLOCK.

CHAPTER I.

‘The fool hath said in his heart——’

‘COME to me, I once more entreat you,’ wrote Vernon to his friend Alic Campbell in England, ‘and share, if for no more than a week or two, my delightful southern solitude. Share my villa with its cool portico—a villa just large enough for two children of Epicurus. Share my garden with its myrtles, and its oranges, and the softly swaying gold of its great mimosa-trees. Yes, I am here in the south and the clear sunshine; and I am not, as you prophesied and as half of my heart urged me, in any of the winter haunts of English fashion and frivolity; but I am embowered safely by myself on the greenest of all the promontories that Europe juts into the Mediterranean. I am settled at the Cap de Juan. I have, indeed, chosen a lovely spot, and already I love it tenderly. All day long through the leaves of my dark evergreens, and through arched bowery openings, the sea shines and sparkles. You and I may change and grow weary; and we have both had much to weary us. But this bluest of blue seas seems to be always one-and-twenty; and as I breathe its breath, full of eternal freshness, the thrill and the dreams of youth once more revive in me. And ah, the view! In a vast majestic crescent the French coast of mountains curves away towards Italy, with its succession of pearl-grey headlands dying faintly and far off into the distance. Midway, about ten miles from here as a boat sails, with its clusters of milk-white houses, Nice lies along the sea-level. And high over all, like a vision of another world, the Alps lift into ether their jagged line of snow-peaks. All day long the lights and the mists are varying; and hour by hour the scene brings my heart to my mouth with some new revelation of a beauty that is too beautiful. It is to me truly a Cleopatra.

Age cannot wither it, nor custom stale
Its infinite variety.

‘Alic—you who are coughing, sneezing, and blowing your nose in England—will not this tempt you? Your first impulse

will be, I know, to refuse me. You are not in spirits, you will say, for the sunshine; you have no energy left to make any exertion. I am quite familiar with the mood of mind you are in. You are like a man who is sea-sick at the extreme end of a steamer, and who yet will not move himself to make his way to the middle. You are arguing to yourself with the unique logic of grief, "I am comfortless, and therefore nothing shall comfort me." Let me try to move you to a brighter and a healthier mind.

'You are wretched, you tell me, because you want to marry a certain person, and because you find that, though she loves you as a friend, she will never love you but as a friend only. Now, I am going to speak very gently to you, and yet I hope convincingly. I am not going to tell you any such idle lies as that your loss is a trifling one. I am not going to tell you that it is an atom less than you feel it to be; and you would, I think, injure your character by trying to undervalue it. No, I will not tell you to undervalue your loss. I will only show you—a thing you have quite forgotten—how to value your gain. And I am going to speak now from my own experience; for your case, with a difference, has been also mine.

'I, as you know well, was at one time to have married; and during a good year's noviciate I was preparing my whole being for its solemn new condition. My character during that period underwent a profound change. My bright-coloured hopes and purposes lost their airy wings. They fell to the solid earth, and found for themselves plodding feet. I felt I was no longer my own. My life was owed to another; and for the first time there dawned on me the true sense of responsibility. But circumstances combined to make my marriage impossible; and after I had already learned to mentally mix my life with another's, our two lives were again made separate. When first I realised this, it was like waking out of a dream. I was conscious of a loneliness I had never known before; and even now, with my shattered marriage prospects, my manhood seems to lie in ashes about me. But what do I find has happened? Something glad, strange, and altogether unlooked for. Out of the ashes of my manhood has re-arisen my youth—my youth, which I thought I had said good-bye to for eternity; and the divine child has again run to meet me with its eyes bright as ever, and with the summer wind in its hair. The sun has gone back for me on the dial. I am three years younger again. The skies seem to have grown bluer, and my step more elastic. Once more free and unfettered, I feel sometimes as if I were walking on air; and I have the delicious sense of having lost a burden, even though I may have lost a treasure as well.

‘You will see my meaning better when I go on to tell you that, though I have recovered the buoyancy of youth, I have by no means recovered its ignorance. I still retain a certain salvage of wisdom, sad and bitter enough in some ways, and yet good for men like us two to remember. It is this—listen patiently. There is nothing in the world so intensely selfish as a woman’s deep affection; and the stronger and more single-hearted it is, the greater becomes its selfishness. A man’s passion is generous when compared with a woman’s love. A man’s passion, at its worst, lasts but a short time; even while it lasts, its demands are limited; and what is more than this, a good man will restrain it. But the truer and more sensitive a woman is, the more thoroughly will she let her love master her; the less effort will she make to retain the least control of it.

‘And what a master it is! Its jealousy is cruel as the grave, and its demands know no limits but the imagination of her that makes them. A woman who loves thus is not content with the chastest bodily constancy; she is not content even with the constancy of an undivided tenderness. These she takes for granted: they are not the things she craves for. What she craves for is the constancy of your whole thought and intellect. You are to have nothing in your mind that you do not confide to her; you are to stifle every interest with which she cannot be associated. If you want any mental help, it is she alone who must help you; and she had sooner you were helped ill by her than well by another person. She will be as jealous of your friendships as she is of your affections, and as jealous of your thoughts and tastes as she is of your friendships. She cannot patiently conceive of you as in relation to anything excepting herself. She desires to absorb your whole life into hers; and the larger part of it, which she naturally cannot absorb, she desires to see perish. Her pleading earnest eyes will be for ever saying to you, “Entreat me not to leave thee. Where thou goest I will go; and go not thou, my love, whither I cannot follow thee.”

‘What!—with all the world of thought and imagination before us, are men such as we are to be tied and bound like this? For my part, the wings of my spirit seem to have all the winds in them; and I have a heart sometimes like a hawk’s or a wild sea-gull’s. It is not a heart that is hard, or that does not soften to companionship. I could often perch tenderly upon some beloved shoulder, and bend my head to listen to words of tenderness. But if the hand that I trusted but once closed to lay hold of me—dared, from love, to use the least pressure to keep me—I should start and struggle, and feel I had suffered treachery. I will stoop

my neck myself; but no one else shall ever draw it an inch downwards. Why do we want companionship? What is a man's need for it? Were my life really a bird's, I would gladly have a she-bird to fly with me; but I would have her only because we were both bound independently for the same resting-place. That and that alone should be the fetterless fetter that united us. But a woman who loves deeply will never love like this. She has no wish to be your companion on these terms. It is not the common end that she cares for, but the united struggle; and she reveres her wish to soar, chiefly because it is her excuse for clinging to you. Thus, on the same principle, she will go nowhere in the mental world herself unless you are there to support her. She thinks it a kind of treason to you to try and walk independently. She cultivates her weakness, that she may be always trusting to your strength; and though her weight might be dragging you to the ground, she would never think of it, never see it, but if possible she would only lean the heavier. Was ever selfishness so pitiless and intense as this? And yet, by a strange magic, it looks so like self-devotion, that a man, if he be not a brute, can hardly fail to be crushed by it. Such love, Alic, may be a thing that suits some temperaments, but surely neither yours nor mine.

'And now I am once more my own. Ah, the sweetness and rest of this serene self-possession! But lately I felt, when I was looking even at the sea or the mountains, that I was not permitted to love them. The shadow of another would always seem to cleave to me and claim me; and I could no longer let my spirit, as I used to do, go floating on the lonely waters. But now I can look everywhere without fear. I can say to the sea, when it makes me in love with loneliness, 'I violate no allegiance due to any companionship.' I can say the same to the forest, when its leafy smells woo me, and the murmur of its brown branches. I can say the same in society, when bright eyes and alluring voices stimulate me, and I feel that many women are far better than one. Then, too—though I will not dwell upon this here—were there a God to turn to, I could turn to Him in solitude. And now in the morning, as I awaken, I often turn to my pillow, and kiss it, and say, 'No head but mine can ever dare to press you.' All the walls of my bedroom seem to smile kindly and quietly on me. By my bedside I see my dear companions, my books—so varied and so unobtrusive—that will themselves tell me all they can, and will ask for no confidence in return; and there, too, I see my letters, which have now the new charm for me, that no one but myself will ever want to open them.

'Yes, I have learned the truest secret of Epicurus, that the

friendship of a man is more than the love of a woman. Friendship is always a free gift; and it is always given readily because it is never owed. Love, too, begins as a gift; but a loving woman will never leave it so. Before you know it, she will have turned it into a debt; and the more she loves the debtor, the more oppressively will she extort the utmost farthing from him. But between friends, Alic, the intercourse is always free. I could have no thought that it would be treason to conceal from you. I could form no ties or friendships that would do you any wrong. And yet—if I may alter Shakespeare in a single word—

And yet, by heaven, I hold my *friend* as rare
As any she belied by false compare.

‘Come, then, and lay all this to your heart; for your heart, just as mine does, will, I know, assent to the truth of it. Cease to think of the solace you would have had in marriage; and dwell on the joys and on the freedom that you still retain, being single. Not only dwell on the freedom, but use it. Come to me, come, then, from your frosty England, and let me see the southern sunlight laughing in your glad grey eyes. If you will, all my house shall welcome you. My champagne is excellent; my cigars and cigarettes are excellent—I had them all sent from London. And my bookcases are well stored with poets, and with your own philosophers. At the end of one of my walks is a certain marble seat. You look straight down at the sea from it, and it is over-arched with myrtles. There is a perfect wilderness of green shade behind it, and in the midst of this, like an enchanted lamp, is a great camellia tree, burning with scarlet blossoms. Close at hand there is a little table, just fit to support a bottle of Burgundy, and a quaint old glass goblet for each of us. The place would, I know, entrance you; and there we might sit together for calm delicious hours, talking of whatever lay nearest to our heads or hearts—of poetry, of philosophy, of love, of religion, or of weariness; or else watching in quiet the waves and the rocks before us, with sometimes some lazy, bright-coloured fishing-boat, floating lonely with its white plume of a sail, and its brown fisher at the stern, bending over his own reflection.

‘Ah! my old companion, will not these pleasures move you? Write, write to me quickly, and say they will. Only, in that case, I have something further to tell you. If you would enjoy the seclusion I have described to you, you must come and enjoy it speedily, and for this reason. On one side of me is a beautiful marble villa, with immense gardens and long winding walks; and on the other side, with immense gardens also, is a large hotel, built like an old French *château*. Up till now, both of these have

been tenantless—last year the Hotel Company failed—and I have been able to use both gardens as my own. But some English people, whose names I do not know, but with whom no doubt I shall make acquaintance, are coming, or perhaps have already come, to the villa. And as to the hotel, what do you think has happened? Our friend the Duchess has taken it—it is still furnished—for the whole of next month, and intends having a large party there. When that time comes, good-bye to solitude. I only learned this a few hours ago, and from the Duchess herself. I cannot say exactly if I am glad or sorry. She will be a very enlivening neighbour, at all events, and her company always charms me. It is not the charm now, as it must once have been, of beauty and sentiment. It is what supplies their place at fifty; it is the charm of mundane humour. This bright gay humour of feminine middle age, it always seems to me, is a very rare gift. It is an artificial product, and is almost peculiar, I think, to what is meant, in its narrower sense, by the word *Society*. The combination of two things in the past can alone develop it—the susceptibilities of the world of Romance, and the indulgence of them in the world of Fashion. However, be our friend's charm what it will, I am at this moment going to enjoy it; as in another five minutes I shall be at dinner with her.

‘And this at last brings me to a confession which will amuse you. Where do you think I am writing you this letter? Not in my philosophic garden, not in my quiet study. All about me is gas-light and gilding, and a murmur of garish life. The figures surrounding me are gamblers and Parisian *cocottes*; and I am breathing, not the scent of the sea or of flowers, but of patchouli and faint stale cigarette smoke. I am in the reading-room at Monte Carlo. I drove over here this morning—or rather, my coachman drove me—partly to try a new pair of horses, and partly for the sake of the starlight drive back again. The Duchess is staying for a day or two at the hotel attached to the gambling-rooms, and it seems she has a little dinner party every night in the restaurant. To-night the Grantlys are coming. You remember Grantly at Oxford? He is now in the First Life Guards; and his wife is a lovely American, whose face is even prettier than her dresses, and, if possible, even more changing.

‘*À propos* of the women here, there is one on the sofa opposite me, who is really divinely lovely. Whenever I look up from my writing, I am met by her soft large eyes, half sad and half voluptuous in their tenderness. She is as different from the women near her as day from night, or rather as the stars from gas-light. She is one of the fallen; I fear there can be no doubt

about that : but refinement—even a sort of nobleness—can outlive virtue ; and, if I have any skill in reading the looks of women, there is something of a higher life yet lingering in that soft pleading face that she half hides from me by her large crimson fan. Some women have a glance that makes me long to talk to them, just as clear sea-water makes me long to plunge in it. Write to me soon. Myself, I must now stop.

‘By the way, besides the Grants, there is another guest expected, who is to me more interesting. I mean Lord Surbiton. He was the first man of letters I ever knew ; and when I was seventeen, he seemed to me little short of a god.

‘Good-bye ; I must be going. My fair one is rising too.’

CHAPTER II.

But the imperial votarist passed on
In maiden meditation fancy-free.

THE Duchess's stately figure was familiar at Monte Carlo, and many an eye followed her as she entered the gorgeous restaurant.

‘Garçon,’ she said, as she took her seat at the large table reserved for her, ‘*Pommery et gréno, extra sec*—the last champagne on the wine list. You must put three bottles in ice instantly, for in five minutes we shall be quite ready for dinner. And—wait, wait a moment, man, for I have not done speaking to you—we are not going to pay thirty-six francs again for a single dish of asparagus ; so you will perhaps have the goodness to recollect that. And you must lay another place if you please, as we shall be five dining this evening instead of four.’

Captain and Mrs. Grantly appeared almost immediately, and with them was an elderly man, in close attendance on the latter. The young guardsman and his wife were a very characteristic couple, and seemed like a bright embodiment of the spirit of modern London. The appearance of their companion was very different. His dress was too showy for what is now correct taste, and his jewelled scarf-pin and sleeve-links were both of enormous size. But on him these splendours seemed to lose half their offensiveness. They were plainly the *fashion* of a past generation, not the *vulgarities* of the present one : they even heightened by contrast the strange effect of his face, with its worn weary cheeks, and its keen glance like an eagle's. This was none other than the renowned Lord Surbiton—the poet, diplomat, and dandy who had charmed the last generation.

The whole party had been winning largely at the tables, and their spirits were quite in keeping with the glittering scene around

them. The crowd which filled the restaurant was to-night even more gay than usual. All the men were at least dressed like gentlemen, and most of the women were far more splendid than ladies. Fashionable exiles from the English world of fashion were detected in numbers by the amused eyes of the Duchess; and with them the fair companions who had caused their exile or were sharing it. It was said even that royalty was not absent, and that there thus was a divine element unrecognised in the midst of the human. Everywhere there was a flashing of restless eyes and diamonds; furred and embroidered opera-cloaks were being disposed of over the backs of chairs; long gloves were being unbuttoned and drawn off; and white hands, glancing with rings, were composing deranged tresses. Above was the arched ceiling glowing with gold and pictures; and the walls, florid with ornament, returned every shaft of lamplight from the depths of immense mirrors, or the limbs of naked goddesses.

‘Now, this,’ said the Duchess, ‘is exactly what I enjoy: charming company, a charming scene before one, and—let me tell you all, for I myself ordered it—a really excellent dinner. However,’ she went on, as she unfolded her napkin, and looked with a slow smile at the *menu*, ‘we must be temperate in the midst of plenty; for remember, Mrs. Grantly, you and I and your husband are to go back to the tables again for one half-hour afterwards—only one half-hour, mind; and then, as Lord Surbiton suggests—he is always, as we all know, poetical—we will have our coffee outside, and compose our feelings under the stars of heaven.’

‘What!’ said Mrs. Grantly, ‘and is Lord Surbiton not coming back to the rooms with us?’

‘Not he,’ said the Duchess. ‘He’s not half a man at gambling. I don’t think your poets ever are. However, we’ll forgive him for the sake of his suggestion about the coffee, which will I think be the pleasantest part of the programme. His lordship has been describing the whole scene to me, just as if I didn’t see it now every night of my life—the great square, lines of lighted buildings round it, fountains splashing in the middle, mountains in the background, and stars, and spheres above us, and all the rest of it. But where,’ she exclaimed presently, as she saw a chair was vacant, ‘where is Mr. Vernon? Has anyone seen our Mr. Vernon? We cannot possibly get on without our one unmarried young man; though, to say the truth, till this moment I had quite forgotten to miss him.’

‘Mr. Vernon!’ echoed Mrs. Grantly with a laugh. ‘I’d advise you, Duchess, not to count upon him. I saw him on the hotel steps only ten minutes ago, and what do you think he was doing?’

Why, he was talking to that wonderful creature we were all admiring at the tables—the woman with the red fan and the long dark eyelashes. I don't know what she was saying, I'm sure, but she had her hand on his arm, and he was bending down to her.'

'Oh, ho——' began the Duchess, with a soft low laugh. But Lord Surbiton interrupted her.

'Vernon!' he said; 'can this, I wonder, be the Vernon that I once knew, some thirteen years ago—a dreamy eager boy, who used to come and show me his poetry?'

'To be sure it is,' said the Duchess. 'Poetry, painting, and heaven knows what else—I believe he has tried all of it.'

'Some of his verses,' said Lord Surbiton, 'were really beautiful, though the language was boyish. They had the same charm in them that his ideal eyes had—little of the gladness of youth, but all its sweetness and its hunger.'

'It seems,' said the Duchess, 'that this is a young man who is very much to be envied; for in addition to all these charms, he has two others that women think irresistible—a fortune and a history.'

'Yes,' said Lord Surbiton, with a wave of his jewelled hand, 'women are always attracted by a man with a history, because it always means that he is to be either blamed or pitied.'

'And what,' said Mrs. Grantly, 'may Mr. Vernon's history be?'

'Ah!' said the Duchess, 'that's just what we don't know, and that's the very reason why we find it so interesting. Never be too curious, my dear, about a friend's history; and then you can always stick up for him with a clear conscience.'

'Look!' exclaimed Mrs. Grantly, 'here the charmer comes. I only hope he won't be trying all his fascinations on me.'

Vernon was of course full of regrets for being behind his time; but these he discovered were met with nothing but laughter. Mrs. Grantly assured him at once that they knew all about him and his doings. 'And this is the man,' she went on—'now, I ask you all to look at him—who says he has come abroad for the sake of philosophic solitude!'

'And why not?' said Vernon; 'I think I am quite consistent. Solitude is my wife, and society is my mistress; and I like to live with the one, and be always intriguing with the other.'

'Well,' exclaimed Mrs. Grantly, 'since we are your society for the moment, our collective place in your heart is, I must say, not very honourable.'

'Never mind about that,' said the Duchess. 'What my suspicions rest upon is Mr. Vernon's solitude—that retiring villa of his at the Cap de Juan: especially now we hear all this about red fans, and whisperings, and hotel doorsteps, and long eyelashes.'

'My attentions on the doorstep,' said Vernon, 'were, I assure you, altogether platonic. My fair friend is, I think, very different from what she seems to be.'

'Very likely,' said Captain Grantly, drily; 'they all are. And what's her rank, Vernon? Is she a princess or a duchess?'

'If she's a princess,' said Vernon, 'she must have lost her principality; for she was dreadfully in want of a thousand francs to gamble with.'

'Very likely,' said Captain Grantly; 'they all are.'

The Duchess, meanwhile, was surveying the motley scene before her. 'I confess,' she said with a soft smile of amusement, 'this is hardly the place one would come to if one were in search of platonic attachments. Now, look round, all of you, and take stock of the company. There are plenty of men one knows—of course, one expects that; but the women with them—did you ever see anything like it? Come, Mr. Vernon, you understand these things. Just observe the couple behind you—they can't talk English, so we needn't mind discussing them—are they man and wife, do you think? Or that fine lady, with the hair sprinkled with gold-dust, whom Lord Surbiton seems to admire so—what relation should you say she was to the old Jew she is dining with? Upon my word, Mrs. Grantly,' she added presently, 'I don't believe that, our two selves excepted, there's a single woman here you could possibly call respectable.'

'That's the very reason,' said Mrs. Grantly, 'why I like being here so much. It makes me feel like an angel. But talking of angels, there goes a genuine one, if you like, for you; there goes Colonel Stapleton. Oh my! and isn't he grown fat and ugly! You'd never have thought—would you?—that that man was once the best dancer in London. And, Duchess,' she went on, 'I hope you admire the big checks on his coat. 'Twould take four of him, I guess, to play one game of chess upon.'

Colonel Stapleton was a florid man of it might be five-and-forty. Despite his inclination to stoutness, he held himself well and gracefully, and had an air about him of dissolute good-breeding. He had one other charm, too, of which Vernon was at once made sensible—a taking and very musical voice, which, as he stopped for a moment to speak to a friend dining, could be heard distinctly at the Duchess's table. 'The one with the red fan?' he was saying gaily; 'yes, she, if you like it, is a regular out-and-outer. She's down here, so she tells me, with some fellow who belongs to the "Figaro."'

Vernon and Captain Grantly both overheard this. The former was somewhat annoyed, and the latter amused at it, though he was

at the same time frowning over his wife's late observation. 'Poor old Jack Stapleton!' he said; 'Jessie can't bear him, though I'm sure I don't know why. He's as good-hearted a fellow as ever lived, and is nobody's enemy but his own.'

Mrs. Grantly, however, was by no means silenced.

'Look at his back,' she said presently, 'as he's sitting down to his dinner. Isn't selfishness written in every curve of it? The way,' she went on, as she leant over to the Duchess,—'the way that man behaved to a young girl I knew is something more than words can describe to you.'

'Jessie,' exclaimed her husband sharply, as if determined to change the subject, 'look behind you for a minute. There's the old hag—don't you see her?—who tried to collar your money this afternoon at the tables. It's worth while watching her just to see how she claws her wine-glass.'

'I hadn't observed her,' said the Duchess. 'Well, she at any rate has no compromising diamonds, and no wicked Lothario to attend to her.'

Mrs. Grantly's eye lit up with a sudden laughter. 'Lord Surbiton,' she said, as she touched his arm with her fan, and pointed out the old woman in question, 'I guess I can show you one virtuous woman here. *Her* morals, I am sure, are strictly unimpeachable. I'll lay you six to one on them in black-silk stockings.'

Lord Surbiton eyed Mrs. Grantly with a look of somewhat sinister gallantry. 'If your feet and ankles,' he said, 'are as lovely as your hands and wrists, I shall proudly pay the bet, even if I have the sad fortune to win it.'

'In that case,' said Mrs. Grantly drily, 'I shall ask you to make your bets with my husband. If you will do so with him on the same principle next Ascot, we shall still manage, perhaps, to keep out of the workhouse.'

Mrs. Grantly, though she said what she chose herself, could always hold her own to perfection; and Lord Surbiton's gaze was now at once withdrawn from her. But a few minutes afterwards, when he again turned to her, there was a change in his whole expression that she was not prepared for. His worn face, as a friend had once observed of him, was like a battered stage on which the scenery was always shifting; and it now had a strange appearance, as of some ruinous transformation-effect. Every trace of its late look had gone from it: it gleamed instead with a grave uncertain tenderness, like a light from a lost boyhood; and even his artificial manner when he spoke did not destroy the impression.

'You have shown me,' he said, 'one virtuous woman. Let me

now show you another.' He stretched out his hand, pointing with it as though it held some magical wand. 'Do you see,' he said, 'the two who have this moment entered?'

The eyes of all the party were turned in the same direction. There was no mistaking for an instant who it was that had attracted him. Standing close to the door, and looking about her in some uncertainty, was a tall English girl, in company of an elder lady. The two had apparently come there to dine, and, being strange to the place, did not know where to bestow themselves. The girl's hesitation, however, could scarcely be called embarrassment. The scene seemed to distress far more than to embarrass her; though it would hardly have been unnatural if it had done both. She was pale as a lily; her fair rippling hair, of which a lock or two curled softly on her forehead, was dressed with a proud simplicity; there was a proud curve in the line of her darker eyebrows; and her eyes were dark and soft as the darkest and softest violet. She stood there in the glare and glitter like a creature from another world.

Lord Surbiton broke silence in slow measured accents. 'It looks,' he said, 'as if an angel had descended in the midst of us, like a snow-flake.'

There was a pause. The apparition astonished the whole party. Vernon's eyes, in especial, were fixed intently on her.

'Angel or no angel,' said the Duchess presently, 'I can see, even from this distance, that she gets her clothes, not from heaven, but from Paris. However, joking apart,' she added, and more gravely, 'upon my word, I quite agree with Lord Surbiton. It is literally an angel's face; and a very high-bred angel's too. Who on earth is she, I wonder? But, good gracious me!—what a place to bring her to!'

Suddenly the two strangers were observed to move forward into the room, whilst the younger one first started, and then broke into a smile.

'Look!' said the Duchess with interest, 'they have evidently found some one they know here. Let us try and discover who it is.'

'Oh my!' exclaimed Mrs. Grantly, 'I can see who: and—would you believe it?—why, it's Colonel Stapleton! Duchess, you don't know what you missed. You should have seen how he jumped up when he saw them, like a beer-barrel on springs! And there's your angel, Lord Surbiton, shaking hands with him. Well, all I can say is, that I wish her joy of her company.'

'Come, Mr. Vernon,' said the Duchess, as dinner drew to a close, 'you seem very silent and abstracted. This interesting young lady has clearly made an impression on you.'

‘Haven’t you noticed him?’ said Mrs. Grantly; ‘he’s been watching her all the time; and I can tell by his face that he’s jealous of Colonel Stapleton. However, Mr. Vernon, there is one crumb of comfort for you; she has not been dining at the same table with him.’

‘No,’ said Captain Grantly, ‘but she’s looked round and smiled at him every ten minutes. Keep yourself calm, Vernon, and don’t go calling old Jack out for it.’

‘Pooh!’ said Vernon, with a gravity that he was quite unconscious of; ‘one could see by her manner that they must be relations, or something of that kind—cousins,’ he went on meditatively, ‘cousins probably, or perhaps even niece and uncle.’

‘Capital!’ exclaimed the Duchess. ‘He’s thought the whole matter out to himself. Mr. Vernon, your tastes are, I must say most versatile. You begin the dinner with Venus, and you wind it up with Diana. But tell me,’ she went on, as she pushed her chair back, and sedately prepared to rise, ‘are you a gambler as well as a lover? For if not, you will perhaps smoke here with Lord Surbiton, while we three go back to the tables for a little; and then we will all meet presently outside for our coffee.’

CHAPTER III.

We are men of ruined blood,
Therefore comes it we are wise.

THE Duchess and the two Grantlys had gone. Lord Surbiton drew from his pocket a gorgeous gold cigarette case, and passed it open to Vernon. ‘That tobacco,’ he said solemnly through the soft smoke-puffs, ‘which has the subtlest of all aromas, was grown amongst the haunted hills of Syria.’ This probably may have been true enough: he omitted to add, however, that he had bought it himself in a spot no more haunted than Bond Street. But the old elaborate manner which had once impressed Vernon, now again arrested him; though his eyes had still been straying in the direction of the fair stranger.

‘It is a long time,’ went on Lord Surbiton, ‘since I last set eyes on you; or to you, yet young as you are, it must seem long.’

‘I have at least,’ said Vernon, ‘one ominous sign of age in me; and that is, I am beginning to value my youth.’

‘Happy philosopher,’ cried the other, ‘who can value the treasure while you still possess it! But you had not learnt such wisdom the last morning I saw you. That was thirteen years ago, and then you were seventeen, and were just leaving Eton. You came

to me, sad and eager, with some verses of yours, that you might ask what a poet thought of them. I suggested to you that you should read them aloud to me, but you were too shy to do so: so I took them myself, and read them aloud to you. When I had finished I looked up; and there were two large tears trembling in my young bard's eyes.'

'What!' exclaimed Vernon, 'and do you really remember the existence of that poor childish stuff of mine?'

'Boy!' said Lord Surbiton in a low sepulchral voice, 'your verses were *not* stuff; and there are certain things which *I* never forget.

Oh Goddess, I am sick at heart, o'erworn
With weariness,
For the weight of life is bitter to be borne
Companionless.

That is how your verses began. Ostensibly, they were a sort of prayer to Diana: but really they were far more than that. They were the voice of youth that is heard through all the ages—youth crying in its solitude for some high companionship. There is nothing, Vernon, so unutterably melancholy as a boy's passionate purity: and for me you were then the symbol of the eternal longing of boyhood.'

'How well,' said Vernon, 'I remember that small poem of mine! I remember the day I wrote it, and the sound of it still rings in my ears; but there is one thing wanting—one thing quite gone from me, and that is the longing I meant to breathe through it. My thoughts and my aspirations of those days have become a mystery to myself. I am startled to find sometimes how utterly I have lost the clue to them.'

'That is always the way,' said Lord Surbiton, 'when life is still developing; and it is owing to this that you now see your youth to be valuable. In the middle age of your boyhood, life was a hungry pain to you: in the boyhood of your middle age it is fast becoming a pleasure. In the first period you were wretched because you longed for the unattainable. Now you are happy because you idealise the attainable. Happy philosopher, I again say to you—philosopher, lover, poet, and man of the world in one.'

'You give me,' said Vernon, 'two titles at least that I have lost all claim to. I am no longer a lover, nor even a would-be poet.'

'Not a poet on paper, it may be,' said Lord Surbiton, 'but a poet in the way life touches you, and in the demands you make on it. And, what!' he went on, fixing a keen eye upon Vernon, 'did you say you were no longer a lover? Why, your lips are red,

there is a subdued flush in your cheek, and the quick light in your eyes is at once as soft and brilliant as a star of sunlight dancing on summer sea-water. Ah, my young friend, never blush to own it. The years spare nothing, and they brush the bloom from all of us. There is a hunger in your eyes now that is not only for a moon-goddess. Do you deny it?' he went on; 'why, within this last couple of hours you have been making love to one lady, and longing, we all thought, to make love to another.'

'Ah,' Vernon answered, 'but the excitement of making love is very different from the repose of loving. And yet, Lord Surbiton, as you imagine, I have had my experiences, and it is from these I speak. I have loved, and have been loved again. I have known the rest and rapture of devotion received and given; and all the fine things that have ever been said on the subject have seemed for the time to be no exaggeration to me. But that high-strung state of feeling has gone as clean away from me as the vague aspirations of my boyhood; and, like them, it has taken with it the faculty by which alone it is to be understood. Love seems to me now to be very much like temper. Your dearest friend can irritate you into the one; the most commonplace woman can trick you into the other: and you adore in the latter case, and you accuse and abuse in the former, in a way which by-and-by you can only stupidly wonder at. I do not want to speak cynically about this. A cynic is a foolish fellow who either is ignorant, or pretends to be, of a good third of an average man's motives—those that are not contemptible; and I know that love, as a fact, can be pure and true and faithful, and that it is to many the one thing worth living for. But myself I can see it only as a passionate perversity both of judgment and of feeling. It exaggerates the value of the special individual, just as cynicism does the opposite for the race in general. The concentrated praise is as false as the diffused censure. Each is equally silly to the eye of the calm judgment. Repose! yes, love very likely brings that to me; but such repose only excites in me the same nervous horror that a restless convalescent feels for his sick-bed. Air, life, movement—these are the things I long for. Let me kick the bed-clothes off, let me pitch the pillows away. Open the door, and let me out to freedom! Another soul close to mine gives me a sense of suffocation; and a face pressed close to mine shuts out all the rest of the universe. I have no wish left for any woman's devotion. Its only effect on me could be to make me despise her judgment. My love-creed, if I still have one, is that of the poet Donne—

I can love her and her, and you and you;
I can love any, so she be not true.'

'Ah,' exclaimed Lord Surbiton, with a new light in his eyes, 'I can gauge you better now. You have the artist's temper, as well as the poet's—two things which by no means usually go together. In their essence, indeed, they are really completely hostile. What marks the poetic temper is the intensity of its sympathy; what marks the artistic is the diversity. The artist's temper I call this, because it is in art only that it can fully express and embody itself; but it is possessed by many who neither paint nor write anything. We have all of us had at the beginning the makings of several characters in us. The artist has the makings of an indefinite number. Most men, further, out of their possible characters harden or settle down into one, but the artist never does. He has, properly speaking, no character, just as the chameleon is said to have no colour. And when vulgar critics say of some great writer's creations, "Here are his own feelings; he has drawn this man from himself," they are at once right and wrong. He has not only drawn *this* man from himself, but he has drawn all; for he becomes himself some new character to be drawn from, every time he suppresses some newly-combined nine-tenths of himself. Is not this, Vernon, your case; though you paint no pictures and have stopped writing poetry? Yes, her Grace was right just now—she's a very shrewd woman in her way—when she remarked how your tastes were versatile, how you responded in the same half-hour to the beauty of Diana and of Venus. Such versatility is the true elixir of youth; and no wonder that one like you would not tie yourself to any single affection. My dear fellow,' said Lord Surbiton, somewhat coming down from his pedestal, 'constancy, though we know its value for most men, is the elixir of middle age. It makes you five-and-forty at once; and it keeps you there.'

Vernon was not perhaps vainer than most men; but all this discourse *à propos* of his own character had, to say the least of it, gained his best attention. The moment, however, he let his eyes wander, a sudden exclamation broke from him, which at once put a stop to philosophy.

'Confound it!' he said in a tone of genuine annoyance, 'while we have been talking of dead Dianas, the real one, the beautiful real one, has taken flight and deserted us.'

Lord Surbiton turned his head, and saw that the fair stranger and her companion had gone. A living beauty always made him practical. 'Come,' he said, rising, 'I am quite ready to go. We shall see her in a moment, in the casino or somewhere; and we'll get her Grace or Captain Grantly to discover who she is for us.'

He took Vernon's arm with a philosopher's dignity, and the

two left the restaurant. They paused in the cloak-room which is just outside, and Lord Surbiton was being helped by a garçon into a magnificent sable overcoat, when a female figure emerged from one of the private dining-rooms. His experienced eye at once caught sight of her ; and in another moment all else was forgotten by him. This charming being proved to be none other than the lady of the red fan, whose beauty and even distinction of look seemed quite to justify all that Vernon had said of her. She came for her opera-cloak ; and before Vernon was even aware of her presence, Lord Surbiton, with as quick a gallantry as his years permitted him, was arranging it for her over her shapely shoulders. He was sufficiently delighted with his performance thus far ; but a still greater pleasure awaited him. The lady, with a look of practised bashfulness, responded ' *Merci, Milord.*' Lord Surbiton at once laid his hand on his heart, and was begging to be told how he was honoured by madame knowing him. ' *Ah,*' she replied, ' and need a renowned man ask ? Why, the poems and the romances of *Monsieur* are as much read in Paris as in London.' Here she caught sight of Vernon ; and, with the quietest smile in the world, ' *I am going,*' she went on, ' once more to the tables. Will not you two come, and join your luck with mine ?'

Lord Surbiton was completely charmed with her, and regretted not a little that to do this was impossible. He was almost aware of a slight pang of jealousy when she bid Vernon to put in more securely a diamond pin that had become loose in her hair.

' *You are very lovely,*' said Vernon, as his hands for a moment lingered on the soft brown plaits, ' and my morals will allow you to play with my heart, though my prudence will not allow you to play with my money.'

He was in the middle of uttering this, when he raised his eyes, and they were met by those of the girl to seek whom he had just risen from the dinner-table. Her glance did but rest on him for a moment ; but its meaning, he thought, was only too plain to him. She seemed at once to comprehend and be surprised at the scene he was taking part in ; and she turned sharply away with a gesture of contempt, pain, and aversion. A disagreeable sense of shame at once came over him ; nor were his reflections made pleasanter by what he observed the next moment. As the girl, with her companion, was quitting the cloak-room, her face lit up in an instant ; and the cause was this : Colonel Stapleton, who was entering, had just met them in the doorway.

The Colonel seemed almost as versatile as Lord Surbiton himself ; for he was quite as familiar with the fair *Aspasia* as he had been a moment before with the pale and virginal stranger. Vernon

and Lord Surbiton had been conversing with the former lady in French; and her accent Lord Surbiton had declared to be quite perfect. The Colonel, however, to whom she turned instantly, composedly addressed some chaff to her in the homeliest English possible; and she with an equal fluency, though with a strong foreign twang, replied, 'If you don't look out, I shall smack your nasty little head for you.'

Vernon started at this astounding utterance, as if an adder had stung him. 'Good Heavens!' he exclaimed to himself, 'what an absolute fool I am!' And not without some *brusquerie*, which the fair one mistook for jealousy, he succeeded in withdrawing Lord Surbiton, and making a hasty exit. 'Her French,' he muttered, 'may be the French of the Faubourg, but her English is very certainly the English of Regent Street.'

Lord Surbiton, however, had completely missed the above piece of *badinage*; and pausing on the hotel door-steps, and laying his hand upon Vernon's arm, 'What a woman that is!' he exclaimed solemnly. 'The soul of the old world still lives and allures in her, with its passion, its grace, and its intellect. But she has been born too late in the years. Her lot should have been cast at Athens, and she should have had Pericles for her companion, and Socrates for her pupil.'

Vernon made no response to this. His thoughts were still busy with those cold eyes that had been fastened on him. 'So much,' he said bitterly to himself, 'for a woman's power of insight! She looks nothing but scorn at me, and yet smiles like a sister at that fat sensual beast there!'

Lord Surbiton had meanwhile again taken his arm, and the two went slowly in the direction where they expected to find their party. Before them lay one of the most singular scenes in Europe. The large *place*, with its gleaming buildings around it, was a lake of transparent shadow, dotted with countless gas-lamps, and full of the vague whispers of fountains and human life. On one side flared the hotel they had just quitted, on another the great casino, pale like a skeleton from globes of electric light. On another, where the buildings were lower and more broken, tall palms might be seen, with their plumes in the clear sky; and beyond were balustrades of marble, and spaces of dark sea: whilst behind and in grim contrast rose the barren towering mountains, and dwarfed the world at the foot of them into a small cluster of fire-flies.

Lord Surbiton, whatever might be his other failings, had one mark at least of the true prophet about him. He had often moments of feeling when he contradicted his own philosophies,

and seemed moved like Balaam in a way he had never bargained for. Something very like this occurred presently.

‘This place,’ he said with his eyes on the mountain masses, ‘always seems to me like the moral sewer of Europe—a great drain’s mouth open at the foot of the hills. Ah, my dear Vernon,’ he went on with a sigh, ‘it is the gift of him who is the seer and artist in one—it is his gift, like a god, to discern between good and evil; and it is his doom personally to become the servant of neither. He is like a Cæsar in sad majesty watching the game of life: and all the lusts and affections as they come to him can say only, *morituri te salutant*. His power, as Goethe accurately said of it, is *dæmoniac*. He belongs, that is, to a middle race of beings who are neither divine nor human; and he cannot form any constant alliance with any human being. Cannot!—no, I am wrong there; perhaps he may if he choose. He may get a human soul for himself by a self-surrender to some one cause, or to some one heart; but in exchange for his soul he must part with his special gift; he can be humanized on no other terms. And this is why, when he dies, there are no flowers strewn on his tomb—no rosemary for remembrance, or pansies for tender thoughts; but only the bloomless laurel—the leaf, not of love, but of homage.’

Vernon was at this moment not in the best of tempers; and though some of these words at a future time came back to him, he was now silent. Presently, however, Lord Surbiton began again, lighting a fresh cigar, and eyeing two young ladies who passed him.

‘I said just now that the strange power I spoke of was lost when its possessor allied himself to any single cause. In our own days that is true—too true. But a cause once existed with which the case was different; and that was the Catholic Church, as a wise man once could think of her. That Church claimed to embrace, and once seemed to do so, all that the most many-sided genius ever could or ever can be busy with. She was at the same time a perfect saint and a perfect woman of the world, and she could understand all man’s lowest impulses, and yet still for ever lead him up to the highest. So we fancied—so we once could fancy. But we are undeceived now. What we revered was our own ideal; and the thing we idealised was merely a juggling sham. This is the century of disillusions.’

‘And yet,’ said Vernon, ‘the Church taught us at least one lesson which, in a century of disillusions, we are not on our way to forgetting—that there is little in this world worth a regret on losing it.’

‘The Church,’ said Lord Surbiton, ‘preached that to the poor

and simple: but with us it can be received only by the wise and prosperous. It may be wisdom to despise the world: but to despise it thoroughly you must first possess it.'

'Lord Surbiton!'—it was the voice of the Duchess—'when you have done quoting poetry, you'll perhaps have the goodness to discover us.' She was seated with the Grantlys at a round table outside the café; and Vernon and Lord Surbiton were passing her without perceiving it. 'See, we have ordered everything; and we have been so thoughtful that here are two chairs kept for you. And now, Mr. Vernon,' she went on, 'I must ask you to observe this. Look—there are two chairs more, for members of our own party also. And who do you think those members can be? Why, your fair friend of the restaurant, and the old lady, her aunt. I met them just now, as we were coming here from the gambling-rooms; and it flashed on me all of a sudden who the aunt was. You, Lord Surbiton, will remember her. She is the widow of Sir Edward Walters, who was our minister for so long at Stuttgart; and the girl—her too I remember now—is that beautiful Cynthia Walters who made such a noise in London three seasons ago, and then went abroad for her health—heart, or lungs, or something—and, so far as I can gather, has never come back since. Her home, it seems, is now with her aunt at Florence. But look, look! here they are coming.'

(To be continued.)

BELGRAVIA.

FEBRUARY 1881.

Joseph's Coat.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

PROLOGUE (*continued*).—CHAPTER IV.

YOUNG JOE, his heart still warmed by his uncle's generosity, sat at the side of the bed in his room at the Dudley Arms that Sunday night, and surveyed the situation. Starting in this well-provided way, it did not seem easy to fail in the world. Practically, as everybody knows, there is an end to the productive powers of a hundred pounds, but, for all that, a hundred pounds is a good round sum for a start in the world, and Young Joe saw already in fancy his fortune made.

'And I'll make poor little Dinah happy, anyhow,' he thought. She haunted him, and her memory filled him with a keen and poignant remorse. 'The poor child,' he said to himself, 'must have her marriage lines.' With that he unstrapped his portmanteau, tumbled out its disorderly papers on the carpet, and set to work to search for the certificate of the marriage between Joseph Bushell, bachelor, and Dinah Banks, spinster. First, he made a hasty and confident grope amongst the papers: next, with a little shade of perplexity on his face, he took a more careful search; and finally, having separately examined every scrap, turned out his pockets, unlocked his chest and searched through its contents, and still met with no success, he sat down on the lid of the box in the midst of his tumbled belongings and clawed his hair with vexation.

'Confound it all!' said Joe. 'The thing's somewhere here, I'm sure. I must look for it by daylight.' With this promise by way of consolation for almost certain loss, he undressed and got into bed. He had but a poor night of it, for Dinah's appealing face was always before him, and he felt alternately base and heroic

as he thought of his encounter with the minister. The candle burned down and went out, with the result particularised in the Honourable Mr. Sucklethumbkin's account of a public execution. Then the moonlight sent into the room a beam which travelled very very slowly across the carpet, and rose very slowly up the fireplace, and when Joe had tossed about for long ages, reached the mirror, and crept along the wall, and slid slowly towards the window, as its brightness faded and died. Then the swallows who built beneath the roof-pipes began to chirrup, and the window glimmered grey. Joe pulled up the blind and lighted a cigar, and looked a last look on the familiar High Street: a last conscious look, at least, for always when Memory brought her budget of pictures to him thereafter, she brought that view, with the grey desolate dawnlight broadening on the closed shutters of the shops, and he heard distinctly, many a time, by Memory's magic, the stately step of the peeler—'the blue-robed guardian of the city streets,' as a minor poet called him once upon a time—patrolling the silent highway.

I—the present writer—have found it necessary, for one reason or another, to face the world anew so often, and under such varying circumstances, that I have almost worn out the sensations attendant on the process. But striving as a faithful chronicler should strive to project myself into Young Joe's personality, I succeed chiefly in calling to mind my first impressions of that melancholy yet inspiring business. I recall the heartache and the sense of freedom—the regrets for past folly and the promises of amendment so devoutly sworn—the dear regard for parted friends, the hope to meet again, the determination to return triumphant.

All these held sway in the young fellow's heart. But for Uncle George's news of the attitude of father and mother, he could willingly have gone home again to say good-bye, not without hope of no good-bye being said. Shame pulled him both ways, now homewards, now abroad. After all, going back was out of the question. He packed carefully, purposing to go once more through the papers, but when he came to them he said, without being quite sure of the motive which moved him, 'I'll look into them on the way,' and so thrust them anew into his portmanteau, and waited drearily for some sign of life in the hotel.

At the first sound of opening doors he rang his bell, and demanded of Boots, who came unkempt and sleepy, the time-table for London. The railway had not reached the outlying Black Country towns at this time, but coaches ran through most of them to the great New Street station in Birmingham, a marvel of art,

whose vast glass roof was in those days, as I can just remember, an object of unfading wonder to the populace. The coach would start in time to catch the mid-day train, and there were four hours to wait. He went downstairs and sat alone in the dismal coffee-room, and being presently broken in upon by a damsel in curl-papers, asked for breakfast, and in an hour's time attacked with languid appetite a cindery dish of eggs and bacon, and investigated a funereal-looking Britannia metal urn containing a dark-coloured semi-liquid tepid concoction announced by the curl-papered damsel as coffee. After this he called dejectedly for his bill, ordered Boots to send on his luggage by the coach in time for the up-train, and set out to walk. His spirits rose as he went along the road. Town seems in danger of meeting town to-day, and some now alive may live to see a vaster London join its scattered parts in the middle of England, forming one solid and prodigious city. But there were fair spaces of field and park about the central town when Joe walked towards it, and here and there a rabbit frolicked across his path, and once he stood still to watch a weasel shoot across the road from hedge to hedge, where a grey rabbit had run a second before. 'The mellow ousel fluted in the elm,' colts pushed their inquiring heads over the gates which held them from the road, the sun shone clear, the wind blew warm. Joe meant no wrong to any human creature. Why should trouble weigh upon him? He pegged on, with snatches of song on his mind, and high resolve in his heart. There was gold in California. Jim Brookes, the High Street tailor's son, had found a nugget weighing two hundred ounces. Gold-digging was the readiest way to wealth the world had seen, and many a man had prospered at it—Why not he? The great Henry Russell's songs were in vogue, and Young Joe sang jollily back to the lark and throstle:—

Pull away, cheerily,
Not slow or wearily,
Shifting the cradle, boys, fast to and fro;
Working your hand about,
Shifting the sand about,
Seeking for treasures that lie hid below.

And so on. The verse was not written in the highest possible style of art, but it might be interesting to know how many young fellows went out of England with that doggerel in their ears and on their tongues. Joe was only one out of many who made it a part of the Litany sung at Gold's great shrine.

He cashed Uncle George's cheque at Lloyd's bank, and drew the hundred pounds in sovereigns, influenced, I fancy, by those

gold-digging visions. Paper is but a poor medium between riches and poverty, after all. You may be able to translate it into gold, but it has not gold's magic, and can exert but little of gold's charm. I am nothing of a money-lover, but I do yet care somewhat for the round ring of minted gold, and find a something sibilant in the rustle of bank paper, as though that rustle whispered, 'Soon shall I fly.' With the hard gold in a lump in his inner breast-pocket, tied in a chamois leather bag, Joe wandered down to the station and awaited the arrival of the coach. By some accident, for the days were leisurely, and people gave themselves plenty of time for most things, the sound of Old Tom's horn came tootling into New Street a quarter of an hour beyond its usual time, and the train was already puffing to be gone. Joe had secured his ticket, and now fell upon his luggage, called a porter, impetuously bade him get these things into the London train, saw them hurriedly labelled, took his seat just in time, and was swallowed up by the darkness of the tunnel before he had looked round him to observe his fellow-passengers. Light, breaking in anew, revealed the florid countenance of Mr. Sydney Cheston, who held out his hand with a loud greeting. Joe took it, a little shamefacedly, but his friend was determined to make light of the affair of the previous day, and was even ostentatiously hearty. At Coventry they were left alone and, having bribed the guard with half-a-crown (after the manner of young British gentlemen before Brinsley Sheridan's grandson gave us the good gift of smoking-carriages), they began to smoke at a great rate; and it befell that in the course of the journey Joe opened his heart, and, having first apologised once more, went on:—

'I'm in a deuce of a mess, old fellow. To tell the truth, I was in a wretched bad temper all day yesterday, or I should never have behaved as I did to you——'

'Don't say a word about it,' Cheston said; 'I didn't mean to hurt you, but it was my fault.'

Then the young men shook hands, and Joe went on again:

'When I got home there was a parson there. He's not a bad fellow for a parson, and I'm very sorry for what happened, but I was in an infernal temper, and he insulted me, and was horribly trying, and annoying, and all that sort of thing; and, gad, sir, I knocked him down!'

Cheston stared hard at Joe and burst out laughing.

'What a fire-eater you are, Bushell,' said he. 'Excommunication, you know. That sort of thing.'

'He was a Nonconformist parson,' said Joe guiltily, 'and really, in cold blood, I've a great deal of respect for him.'

The irreverent Cheston screamed with laughter, and by-and-by asked breathlessly:

'You must have had a row about it?'

'A row!' said Joe ruefully. 'My mother told me either to apologise or leave the house and never go back again. I couldn't apologise. It was impossible.'

'Especially under compulsion,' said Cheston, still laughing. 'If apologies were as plenty as blackberries, I wouldn't give an apology under compulsion. Well?'

'Well,' Joe returned, 'the long and the short of it is, I'm on the way to America.'

'No!' cried Cheston.

'Yes,' said Joe stolidly, 'I'm on the way to America.' Then cheering a little, 'I shall try my luck on the Pacific side, amongst the nuggets.'

'By George, you know,' said Cheston, surveying him with an eye of admiration and envy, 'I should like that. What a lark it *would* be. No,' he added sorrowfully, 'the governor wouldn't listen to it. In the words of Shenstone, or something like 'em—

I should like for to follow you there,
And to toil where the gold-nuggets breed;
But papa would be ready to swear,
And——

Hang it all! I'm full of the so momentary flashes of genius. Aha! Got him!

And I know that I shouldn't succeed!

Besides, my son, I haven't got the rhino. But are you really going? When?'

'I'm really going, and I'm going now,' said Joe. 'Now at once.'

'I suppose,' said Cheston, striving purposely to bury Joe's angry meanness of the day before, 'I suppose you remember that I owe you something? Thirty odd pounds, I think it is. If you'll come round with me, I'll let you have it.'

'Well,' said Joe, striving also to wipe out that ugly remembrance, 'if you don't mind, Cheston, I'd rather you kept it until I ask you for it. I have enough to begin with, but I might get hard up, and in that case it would come in usefully. You be my banker, and when I find myself in danger of wanting the coin I'll send for it.'

'Good,' said Cheston; and the two began to talk about California, and told each other what they knew of it—which was mostly more marvellous than true,

'But what,' asked Cheston, 'induced you to come to London? Isn't Liverpool the nearest way?'

'Why, yes,' said Joe, 'I suppose it is. But—' there he blushed a little, 'you see it's altogether a little sudden for a fellow, and—and, in point of fact, I never made up my mind until I started to walk into town to catch this train. London is the first place a man tends to, you know, and it's a sort of axle whose spokes radiate to everywhere.'

'Well,' said Cheston, with that happy-go-lucky spirit which distinguishes the average young Englishman, and perhaps helps to make him what he is—the wonder of the world for pluck, and dash, and enterprise—'it doesn't matter a great deal where a man goes, so long as he has the right stuff in him, and sticks to what he takes to.'

'I'm not going to be beaten,' said Young Joe valiantly. 'Money isn't everything in the world; and if I can't get much of it, I must do with little.'

'Oh, yes,' Cheston answered, 'and besides that, your governor will turn up trumps at the finish. You're the only son, I think?'

'The only child,' said Joe, with a tremor on his lip. 'I mustn't stay away too long, after all, for they're both getting old, and a little bit frail, and it wouldn't be nice to come back and find them gone.'

'You must write to 'em,' Cheston answered cheerfully.

The conversation languished. Young Joe's heart once more began to fail him. He had fairly started now, and going back was more than ever impossible until he had at least done something. With little further speech they came to London, and went down to the luggage-van together to secure their belongings. Cheston's came out first. Then, after a long delay, came one of Joe's properties—his chest. Then, after another pause, the van was cleared, and there was no sign of his portmanteau.

'Must have been put out at Rugby, sir,' said the porter in answer to the young man's claim. 'We can send back for it. Where shall we send it, sir?'

Joe gave his address at an hotel in Covent Garden, and was driven thither in a hackney coach. Cheston accompanied him, and that night they dined together. In the morning Joe made inquiries as to the easiest and quickest way to California, and learned little that was likely to be of practical use to him, for he had no idea as to the right way of going about the business, and wandered rather listlessly about the docks, standing promiscuous treat to nautical-looking men who appeared to have nothing special on their hands. The best way, he concluded, would be to

get to New York, and make a start for the gold fields thence. The route to New York at least was clear. Meantime, back to the hotel to see if the lost portmanteau had arrived, and, in case it had, to send the certificate of marriage to Dinah. For it was characteristic of Young Joe that, at the moment at which the portmanteau was known to have disappeared, he was resolved that it held the certificate, though whilst it remained in his possession he was most mournfully sure it did not.

No portmanteau for him at the hotel. No news of it at the railway station. No news of it next day, and next day still no news. And on the Thursday night the fast-sailing clipper ship 'Orinoco' dropped down the Thames, and the portmanteau was finally left behind—and with it the last hope of Dinah's peace? Not so, young Joe inwardly declared. Cheston was with him on the deck, and was prepared to go as far as Greenwich, to keep heart and hope in him at the start.

'We'll have a bottle of champagne, Bushell, for doch an dhorras,' says that young gentleman cheerfully.

Joe accedes, and they go below, and with laughter and clinking of glasses and good wishes and high hope they drink to each other.

'And here,' cried Cheston, 'here is the Rose of the Midlands, coupled with the name of the gentleman who will shortly return from Tom Tiddler's ground with his pockets full of nuggets.'

Joe laughed, a little constrainedly, and drank, murmuring into the glass a word of tenderness for Dinah. He would fain have given his confidence to Cheston, but something withheld him, some fear perhaps of breaking down, or some childish dread of seeming sentimental, or reluctant about going at this final moment.

'You'll let me know how you get along,' says Cheston; 'and,' drawing him aside, 'you'll claim the coin whenever you want it, you know.'

'All right,' Joe nodded in return. New clinking of glasses, new good wishes. Wine makes the heart glad and the face to shine, and sets the little cords within tingling and ringing to tunes tender and hopeful, mournful and triumphant. On deck again, the inward orchestra playing 'Good-bye, Sweetheart,' 'The Emigrant's Farewell,' and 'Cheer Boys, Cheer,' in a strange laughing tearful medley. Steadfast lights ashore and shifting lights afloat, shining reflected on the transparent gloom of the river, many a time to be recalled by fancy, and looking already memorable and unlike anything seen before. Greenwich, and 'good-bye'—the little boat dancing shoreward into darkness, the great

black hulk sliding sullenly down the river and towards the open sea.

And now for the first time in his life Young Joe felt alone. A man may be alone a thousand times without feeling it, or may feel it in spite of society. There are certain normal conditions of nature which we do our best to leave unrecognised. Silence is one, darkness another, solitude a third. We make raids into silence with a tremulous defiance, as a boy whistles to keep his heart up when walking in the dusk through a churchyard. We defy darkness in the feeblest ways, and she has her own in spite of us. One of these days she will creep at an extinguished sun and stifle the fading stars. And as for solitude, every human soul is so alone that no other can get into reach of it, but we make pretence of being gregarious and we forget our fears. These three great negatives, silence and darkness and solitude, are the eternal background against which we fantoccini disport ourselves, for Heaven knows whose amusement. We huddle together to forget these gruesome everlasting negatives; but when we are for a moment severed from the crowd, how the knowledge of them swoops down and shrivels us! Solitude, silence, darkness on the sea, and the hapless Young Joe in the middle of them.

He had never been at sea before, and he suffered physically. The Reverend Paul Screed was avenged already, and could he have appreciated his enemy's miseries, he would have been more than ready to forgive. Surely, thought Joe, there was nothing in the world—nothing, nothing, nothing—which could make it worth while to endure this helpless horrible nausea, this fruitless revolt of soul and body against a universe suddenly grown hideous and unbearable. 'Ah, death I'd gladly welcome,' sings the melodious Italian tenor in florid declamation to Leonora. Young Joe had no heart to sing it, but he groaned it, as with heavy eyes and pea-green countenance he lay in his berth surrendered to misery. Only one man in a hundred tastes the awful possibilities of sea-sickness, but Joe was the one in the hundred who sailed aboard the 'Orinoco,' and the ship's look-out had sighted Kinsale Head before he was better. Then he began to recover pluck and appetite together, and the remainder part of the voyage went pleasantly enough. When a man has been as penitent for three or four days as he had been, penitence is apt to be worn a little threadbare. There is no emotion which cannot be out-worn, and Joe had got through his stock of repentances too speedily perhaps. I knew a schoolboy whose one gustatory passion was cheese. Once being possessed of a spare half-crown, he bought an egregious lump of Gruyère, and attacked it in the solitude of his chamber, and ate until he could

eat no more. He has arrived now at man's estate, that school-boy; and his youthful feast was enjoyed years and years ago, but if you show him Gruyère at this day you almost drive him from the table. He ate enough to last him for his lifetime. In like manner Young Joe was so greedy of remorse that his four days' feast of woe lasted him the voyage and for some time beyond it.

He landed in due time in New York, and before he had set foot upon American ground the crushing sense of solitude had retired in favour of an exhilarating feeling of independence. He had already been so long absent from Dinah without sending her a message that he felt it unworthy to write now, until he had begun to do something to atone for absence and silence. He was a little dismayed to discover that he was as far off from California, practically, as ever, and that he had not money enough to go there, except in the roughest and meanest way. Then, people with whom he talked set the chances before him in a discouraging manner, and in brief, his money melted with surprising swiftness, and, though employment was plentiful enough for those who knew how to work, he knew how to do nothing, and therefore got nothing to do. He wrote to Cheston and to Uncle George. Cheston kept his promise and sent the money he owed, and that also melted. Uncle George wrote a letter, which he took the precaution to post in Birmingham, lest the local postmaster should know the lad's address. In this epistle he set forth his deep sorrow at the fact that his brother and his sister-in-law were still implacable. Young Joe's resolve to emigrate—according to Uncle George—had been the last straw which broke the camel's back, and they were now irreconcilable. The writer expressed his deepest regret for young Joe's prospects, but he sent no money.

Then came two or three days' semi-starvation in New York, then an engagement as fire-mender at a brick-kiln some miles outside the city. This business in a rough and squalid way held body and soul together, but there was no chance of making a home for Dinah out of it. And so Dinah was still unwritten to, and the days and weeks and months went by. He had new remorse, but he had his work to do and his bodily discomforts to endure, and by-and-by memory grew less poignant. After some months he fell in with a lumber ganger, and went with him to the Dominion and lived a rough backwood life, hardening his hands and toughening his muscles and growing a great beard. Anybody seeing him would never have recognised the spruce young Midland dandy, and he had almost forgotten himself.

By this time he was ashamed and afraid to write to Dinah. He was very unhappy about her often. He was very tender and

sore in his thoughts about her always. But he never wrote, and he began to hope that she would forget him, and give him up for dead, and carry on her life without him. In one of his rare letters to Uncle George, a couple of years after leaving England, he mentioned Dinah so particularly that the old fox suspected him of an inclination to come back again. So he wrote in answer that Dinah Banks had married, and from that time forth he received no letters from his nephew. This rejoiced him, for with every day that passed he felt his hold upon his brother's fortune surer and more sure.

CHAPTER V.

THE Saracen's Head was a cheerful and comfortable hostel, proffering on its signboard good accommodation for man and beast, and fulfilling its promise liberally within. Sanded floor, huge open fireplace blazing with an enormous fire, after the generous-looking fashion of the mining districts, where coal is cheap and a good fire is counted first of household comforts. Big bare oak beams in the ceiling, with flitches of mellow bacon stuck flat across them, ripening to the rasher stage; shining onions in nets and reeves, and hams in canvas jackets bearing them company. Prodigious solid tables of dark oak, much battered by years of rough usage and irregularly gauffed at the edges by idle pocket-knives. Heavy wooden settles, polished by the lounging shoulders of many generations of guests, and staunch to carry generations more. The present assembly—clad in thick flannel jackets, thrown open to show the gaudy lining of cheap felt carpeting, heavy ankle-jack boots, mostly worn unlaced, with a big crumpled tongue hanging out, as though the boots were thirstier than their wearers, nondescript hats of felt, shaped like basons and without a pretence of brim—the present assembly sat smoking and drinking in a quiet contentment almost bovine. It was noticeable that most of the men were blazoned in a singular manner on the face, as if they had been tattooed, and the design had been half obliterated. Each man so marked had felt Death's hand upon his cheek once at least. But that was commonplace, every-day, and in the way of business, and as a general thing was not much thought of.

This was the Saracen's common room, and was rather out of the Saracen's own direct line of observation. He swung, with inflamed countenance, portentous turban, unnumbered jewels, and bilious eyes, above a brighter window round the corner, and behind the brighter window lay a snugger room—a sort of library

of liquor, where bottles held the shelves instead of books. It was a mere handbox of a room, and what with its jolly fire and crimson window blind, and its glitter of glass and gilt lettering, it glowed and sparkled on this wintry night with amazing warmth and brightness. For the wind was howling and the Saracen was pitching gustily to and fro outside, and shrieking rustily at the weather, and the rain beat at the windows frantically at times. All this redoubled the inner warmth and brightness, of course, and sent the inmates of the cosy room closer with comfortable shiverings round the fire. The inmates of the room were three in number. On one side of the fire sat an old woman, and on the other a young one. Between them an old man in a sleeved waistcoat sat back in an arm-chair and scorched his legs with an aspect of much contentment. He was a fat man with a pale countenance, white hair, and a well-filled rotund waistcoat. Every now and then with his fat hands he caressed the rotund waistcoat as if encouraging his digestive faculties, as you pat a horse when he has pleased you. The old woman was ruddy and neat and clean, in an old-fashioned mutch cap with spotless crisp lace edges and having a white silk kerchief drawn squarely over her round shoulders. The young woman was pretty but wistful-looking, her face paler than it should have been; her eyes giving a kindly observer warrant to believe that they were more used to tears than eyes which had a right to be gay by virtue of their brightness and their beauty should be.

'Daniel,' said the old lady, 'what's the time?'

The old man stole a caressing hand across the rotundity of his figure and pulled out a fat pale watch. 'It's nearhand on ten.'

'Time them chaps was goin', then,' said the old lady.

'Ah!' said the old man assentingly, 'I suppose it is, missis. I suppose it is.' He drew his legs from the fire, and stroked them persuasively, as who should say 'Will you carry me?' The legs apparently declined, for the feet went back to the fender, and their owner's hands once more offered a silent recognition of the efforts made by his digestive organs. A long-drawn sigh seemed to admit that they were overworked, and that he had no wish to hurry them.

'I do declare, our Daniel,' said his wife placidly, 'you're gettin' lazier every day.'

'Very like, missis,' assented Daniel, 'very like. A mon do't get no suppler at my time o' life.'

'I'm ashamed on you, Daniel,' said the wife, half vexed, half laughing. 'Dinah, light your father's candle, an' send him to bed.' The girl rose to obey. The old woman, laying down the

knitting which had hitherto occupied her plump white fingers, set her hands upon the elbows of her arm-chair and made a motion to rise. By that time the struggle between the smile and the frown was over and the smile had won. Her placid and good-humoured gaze followed her daughter's languid motion across the room, when suddenly her hands relaxed their hold upon the elbows of the chair, and she sank back with a look in which terror and suspicion were singularly blended. The girl reached a candlestick from the mantelpiece, crossed the room for a spill of paper, returned, lighted the candle and set it in the old man's hand. Then stooping over him she kissed his cheek, and sat down in her corner. The mother arose and left the room. A moment later her voice was heard.

'Now, Willy-um, your mother'll be a sittin' up for you. George Bethell, you ought to ha' been abed an hour ago. Tummas, you're on the night shift, I know, an' it's time as you was gone.'

'Let's have another half-gallint, mother,' pleaded one solemn roysterer gruffly. 'It'll on'y be a half a pint all round.'

'Not another drop o' drink'll be drawn i' this house *this* night,' returned the old lady with unusual acidity of tone.

'Missis,' responded the young man first addressed, 'yo' mote [must not] send Tum whum sober. His ode woman ain't used to it. Her'll have a fit, or summat.'

'Haw, haw, haw!' from the assemblage. The old lady turned upon the wag with solemn anger.

'Willy-um Bowker,' she said, 'you'm worse than any on 'em, an' to be so young too. It's known far an' wide as nobody ever got drink to mek him unsteady at the Saracen's Head, neither Tummas Howl nor no man.'

'Missis,' said the wag with instant propitiation in his tone, 'it een't like yo to turn rusty at a joke. But we gone away dry to-night i'stead o' drunk, an' for my part I likin' to be about half-way.' A murmur of general approval greeted this statement, and every man seemed to be in favour of the golden mean. But the old lady was inexorable.

'Drunk or dry,' she said with much acerbity and decision, 'you'll go as you are.'

'Come on, chaps,' said Mr. Bowker, who as yet was beardless. 'Her's as good as a mother to all on us, an' what her says her sticks to. "Good-night, missis, and no offence," as Tum said to the windmill last time he fell agen it.'

'Good-night, missis,' said each grave roysterer as he passed her. She answered each by name. 'Good-night, 'Minadab. Good-night, Ebenezer. Good-night, Meshach.' And so on through a list of





'We were married last Whitsuntide.'



the quaintest names, until the last had tramped up the sanded passage and had turned out into the rain. She blew out the candles, bolted the door behind the retiring guests, and returned to the smaller room. The old man had gone upstairs, and the girl was preparing to follow. The staircase, with steps of well-scoured white-sanded wood, opened into this snug little room, and the mother, closing the door, stood with her shoulders against it regarding Dinah. The girl looked at her meekly, but with an air a little startled.

'Our Dinah,' said the mother, 'I want to speak to you. You'd better sit down.' The girl obeyed. 'There's somethin' the matter wi' you. What is it?'

'There's nothing the matter with *me*, mother,' answered Dinah wearily.

'My gell,' said Mrs. Banks advancing, and bending towards her with an anxious tremulous severity, 'you can't deceive me. There's somethin' the matter.'

'No,' said Dinah, looking puzzled; 'I'm a bit dull. That's all.'

'Dinah, you can't deceive an old experienced woman. There's somethin' the matter with you, and somethin' very dreadful. Tell me this minute what it is.'

'Oh, mother,' said Dinah, in an agitated whisper, 'am I going to die?'

'It'd a'most be better if you was,' said the mother. Dinah's face was white, and her eyes were wide open with fear, but at this she flushed suddenly, and shrank and cowered, with her arms drawn across her face. Her very ears and neck were red and white by turns, as she bent down.

'Is it that?' she sobbed; 'oh, is it that?'

'Dinah! Dinah! you wicked gell,' said her mother. 'Tell me who it is!' Dinah bent lower and lower, and drew herself away as any defenceless thing draws back into itself at the touch of an intruding finger. Her mother seized one of her hands, and strove to draw it from her face, but Dinah held her head down so resolutely, and drew her arms so tightly towards herself, that the old woman was powerless to effect her purpose. 'Tell me who it is!' she repeated severely, relinquishing her hand. 'Is it young Joe Bushell—as has broke his father's and mother's heart, and made a huzzy o' you as well?'

'Oh, mother,' cried Dinah, dropping suddenly upon her knees, and seizing the old woman by both hands, 'we were married at Waston Church last Whitsuntide.' Dinah's mother dropped down upon her knees and faced the girl.

'You was married? At Whitsuntide? You an' young Joe Bushell?'

'Yes,' cried the girl, and suddenly releasing her mother's hands, she fell forward upon the floor, and hiding her face again, cried passionately. The elder woman fell forward also, and clipping her by the waist, strove to lift her, but again Dinah would not move. So they knelt there and mingled their tears.

'Dinah,' said the mother, whispering, 'it never crossed my mind till to-night when you got up to get your father's candle, an' then it come to me at a run. But, Dinah, I'm sorry for you, an' you'll have a bad time wi' your father an' the neighbours. Oh, you poor silly gell not to tell me as you was married! An' now he's gone, the Lord alone knows wheer.'

'He'll come back again,' sobbed Dinah. 'If he's alive, he'll come back again.'

'Haven't *you* heerd on him, neither?' asked her mother in surprise and fear.

'No,' wept Dinah, 'never since the day he went away. Oh, mother, do you think he's dead? They say he's gone to America, an' he might ha' been drowned at sea, or anything. Oh, I can't think as if he'd been alive he'd ha' left like this. And he promised to send my lines an' all, an' I've never heard a word.'

'Dinah,' said the mother in a horror-stricken whisper, 'haven't you got your lines?'

'No,' answered Dinah, still weeping. 'He promised to send 'em the day he went away.'

Then the mother lifted up her voice and wept aloud.

'Dinah, you're a ruined gell, and I'm a miserable disgraced old woman!'

The immortal Doctor Marigold remarks that in his father's days 'registration hadn't come up much.' So far as the knowledge of poor Dinah and her mother went, registration had not come up at all. To this very day, in that part of England in which they lived, there are women who believe that the possession of their 'marriage lines' is the only surety of their own honour. To lose their 'lines,' in the belief of those simple souls, would be to invalidate the marriage ceremony, and to make their children illegitimate. Nor is this curious superstition confined to the downright ignorant classes, as you might fancy. Fairly well-to-do people, who can read the newspaper without spelling the hard words at all, and who would with righteous anger resent the imputation of ignorance, still stick to the belief. Thirty years ago it was probably general.

Mrs. Banks, landlady of the Saracen's Head, was not by nature

an imaginative or an inventive woman. Unless you choose to call the immortal allegories of Bunyan by that name, she had never read a romance in her life. Nowadays Mr. Wilkie Collins is to the fore to help anybody to an elaborate plot upon emergency, and there is, indeed, scarcely a condition of life imaginable upon which modern fiction could not throw a light more or less direct and helpful. But feminine human nature existed on much the same lines as now before the popular novelist came into being. Necessity is the mother of invention, and here if anywhere in the world was a necessity of the sternest sort. At any risk, the family reputation must be saved: at any risk short of crime. It would be surely the very whitest of white lies if the mother could acknowledge her daughter's child as her own, and could thereby save her daughter's reputation. In any case, the material cost of the child's maintenance would fall upon the Saracen, and his shoulders were broad enough to bear without tremor a score of such burdens. Dinah was the only child of her parents, and if she shared in the deceit she could rob nobody. So the old woman mellowed her plan, and slowly turned it over, and then laid it before Dinah.

'Dinah, my dear, we're in a peck o' trouble, and we shall ha' to get weselves out on it as best we can. It ud break thy father's heart to know it, and it mustn't be let get to his hearin' at all.'

'How can we help it?' asked Dinah, forlorn and pale.

The old lady revealed her plan in a sentence.

'He must be made to think as the child's mine.' Dinah quivered at this. One of those amazing and mysterious instincts which make mothers what they are, awoke in her, and she felt as if her unborn baby were being stolen from her. The mother saw this and understood it, being a mother. 'By yourself it'll be all your own. I must tell Daniel as I expect it. He'll be sore amazed, I doubt, but you must get away into the country when the time's comin', an' I must come to see you. Then you'll ha' to write to your father an' say as I'm took ill, an' can't come back again. Then, when it's all o'er, we can come back together, an' nobody 'll think anythin' about it.'

From the first moment of Dinah's proclamation of the truth, there had been no shadow of doubt in the mother's mind. She believed the story unreservedly, and when Dinah told it in full, setting forth the errant Young Joe's reasons for concealment, she, though her anger burned against the runaway, forgave her daughter the folly of which she had been guilty.

The winter wore away, and through it all Dinah was kept almost a prisoner. Daniel was not often curious about her, but when he was his wife was equal to the occasion, and satisfied him

easily. What should make *him* believe that a plot like the beginning of a melodrama was going on at the Saracen's Head? The spring began to hint that it was coming, and the time drew near.

'Our Daniel,' said Mrs. Banks to her husband, 'our Dinah is looking a bit delicate, don't you fancy?'

Daniel was a good husband, and agreed with his wife in all things. He had had five-and-twenty years of married life, and found that a policy of general acquiescence kept things smooth.

'Is her?' said Daniel. 'Well, I thought I'd noticed it myself.'

'I think o' sendin' her to Wardenb'ry,' said Mrs. Banks, 'for change of air, like. What do *you* say, Daniel?'

'Very well, missis,' said that easy man. 'It'll do her a bit of good, mayhap, poor wench!'

'Mayhap it will, Daniel,' said Mrs. Banks. 'We'll go to-morrow.'

Daniel was somewhat taken aback by this precipitancy. Commonly at the Saracen's Head a thing was mentioned, discussed, put by, mentioned and discussed again, and put into action long after in less sleepy places it would have been forgotten. He offered no opposition. He was accustomed to philosophise about women in his own way. 'A woman,' he had been known to say, 'is like a pig. Her'll nayther be led nor drove, an' it's as tryin' to a mon to do one as it is to do the t'other.' So, as a rule, Daniel said nothing, but encouraged his digestive apparatus by patting his waistcoat, and let things take their course.

Wardenbury was thirty miles off, and Daniel knew it vaguely as being Coventry way. Mrs. Banks had relatives there, and in the long course of her married life had paid it two or three visits. Daniel used to speak of himself as being 'no great hands of a traveller.' He had been born at the Saracen's Head, and had never been farther away than Birmingham. But though he was no traveller, and might, had he been a demonstrative man, have run a risk of seeming hen-pecked, he had his feelings as a husband.

'Mother,' he advised, 'I shouldn't go to Wardenb'ry yet, if I was you. Think o' your condition.'

'Think o' your own condition, y' ode timberhead!' returned his wife, 'an' leave me to think o' mine.'

'Well, think on it,' said Daniel. Mrs. Banks bustled away to tell Dinah that matters were arranged, and to help her to prepare for the journey. The landlord of the Saracen was not in the least degree offended by his wife's outspokenness. Had she even called upon him to confirm her criticism he would probably have done it.

The morrow came, and Dinah was smuggled into the trap in the back yard. The mother followed. A shock-headed stable-boy called Jabez drove the pair to the railway station, and returned alone. Next morning came a letter to Daniel stating that Mrs. Banks would spend a day or two at Wardenbury.

'I knowed how it 'ud be,' said Daniel. 'Once let 'em goo agaddin' about, an' thee mays't whistle for 'em afore they comin' back again.' He had not the remotest suspicion. He had never read anything more romantic than an invoice for wines and spirits, and he had never seen a play. Even if he had, why should he suspect his wife and daughter? The day or two lengthened into a week, and then came the news that he was again a father. His old age was blessed with a son. He took an extra glass or two on the strength of it, and went about with an air of proprietorial gravity, crossed at times by an involuntary smile. Towards evening the neighbours dropped in as usual. Daniel imparted the news and was congratulated. He sat in his big arm-chair with his hands resting on the crook of a thick walking-stick and his elbows squared, and looked as if he thought that he deserved the congratulations and had earned the applause of the world. There was an air upon him as of one who might boast if he would, but would not. The little snuggerly was rather better filled than common that evening, and the health of the son and heir was drunk pretty frequently. Daniel could do nothing less than join. Liquor took little effect upon him: he was accustomed to it, and his inner man was toughened to its assaults. It floated his smile to the surface a little oftener, that was all. But when closing time came, and he was left alone, he gave vent to his joy and triumph. He struck his stick upon the floor with both hands, and arose; and laughed long and loud.

'Ha, ha ha!' cried Daniel, shaking and beaming; 'theer's life in th' ode dog yit.'

That night shock-headed Jabez had to guide the landlord upstairs, but on the morrow the old man had accepted the position of affairs, and awaited the arrival of the infant and his mother with an approach to phlegm. He had never received many letters, and had never had occasion to write many. The lack of correspondence did not affect him. Dinah wrote once or twice, but that was all, and mother and daughter came back with the infant, after little more than a month from the date of their departure. Dinah's restoration to health seemed little less than miraculous. Her languid heavy step was changed for one light and full of energy. Her face beamed and bloomed once more, and there was no trace of grief in her eyes. And surely never was sister so

passionately devoted to a late-born brother who came to step in between herself and wealth. For old Daniel—who, in a quiet way, was very well to do—made no secret of his intent to leave everything—or nearly everything—to the young stranger. He was ludicrously proud of the baby, and used to rock him in his cradle or watch him as he yelled and fought against milk-warm water and soap, or crowed, in better moods, for kisses in his elder sister's lap. Dinah never allowed him to crow in vain. The old man was amazed sometimes by the almost savage fervour of the kisses with which she mumblingly devoured the little pink body and the podgy little face and hands. Mrs. Banks and her daughter between them attended to the infant's wants with amazing ardour, and sometimes almost quarrelled for the possession of him.

Once Daniel overheard a colloquy between them.

'Dinah,' said her mother, in a half-cross, half-appealing tone, 'you might let me nurse the babby now an' then.'

'He's mine,' said Dinah defiantly.

'Why, Dinah,' cried Mrs. Banks, seeing the old man looking in at the door, 'a body might think as you was the mother as bore him. Give me the child, I tell thee.' A meaning look passed between them. Dinah understood, and surrendered little George. But scarcely a day passed in which she was not in danger of betraying herself. She would sit for hours and hours poring over the little red snub-nosed baby face, reading a likeness to the absent Joe in features where your eye or mine could have discovered no atom of resemblance, and where she found one clearer than the truest photograph the sun ever made. It was curious and yet natural how the presence of the child atoned for the absence of the father. And yet there was a terrible cruelty in it. The child would never learn to call her 'Mother.'

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Rebecca Bushell took her ultimatum to Young Joe, then packing up for departure in his bedroom, she saw, lying upon the bed, an old light overcoat, with its pockets turned inside out. In those pockets Joe had made hasty search for the certificate, and, not finding it, had cast the coat aside. The mother walked into the son's empty room next morning. It was just as he had left it the night before. All the drawers had been taken bodily from the chest, and were stacked disorderly on each other beside it. The mother, by matronly instinct, began to abolish disorder, crying silently the while. Then wiping her eyes with her apron and looking round to see if all were straight, she noticed

the light overcoat thrown across the bed. With native tidiness she took up the coat and straightened it, and observing a rent in one of the pockets, drew out a housewife and sat upon the bed to repair that alight mischief; folding the coat carefully, she placed it in one of the drawers, smoothed the pillows, adjusted the hangings of the bed, and left the room.

This empty chamber became sacred to motherly prayers and tears thereafter, when many heavy months had gone by, and Young Joe's silence had not been broken. Many a time she knelt there and followed him into she knew not what of danger and temptation, and many a time she opened the drawer to look at the coat, which was the only relic her only child had left her. By mutual consent of sorrow, husband and wife spoke little of the absent son; but Old Joe would yet break out at times, with a shake of his head:—

‘Becky, you was too hard on the lad.’

‘Joseph,’ Rebecca would answer, ‘he that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chastiseth him betimes.’

‘Yes,’ Old Joe would say in return, ‘that’s well enough, but you was too hard on the lad.’

So Rebecca bore alike her own burden and a load which was not hers. She had but one way with all her troubles—to cast them on the hands of that vast, vague, cruel, unfatherly Fatherhood who was the refuge of His chosen, and the scourge and overwhelming terror of all others. She went into her son’s room, and there knelt down, and poured out her soul in silent tears; and after a while, seeing how she grieved, Old Joe troubled her no more.

The Reverend Paul Screed was less reticent.

‘It is ordained,’ he would say, ‘that the saints shall be troubled, lest they become too much absorbed by the world;’ and by a thousand platitudes of the sort he strove to console the inconsolable, probing a wound which could only heal by rest. The Reverend Paul was a good man, and tried hourly to be better than he was, but he had no touch of tact in all his clumsy nature. I looked up to him in my youth, and I respect his memory now, but I could find it in my heart to wish him and his kind an island to themselves, where they should vex none out of their own communion. Yet, within six months of the day on which Young Joe departed from his native town, the minister did as noble a thing as lay within him to do. He sat once more at meat with Old Joe and his wife, and dinner being over, the minister cleared his voice with a sorrowful ‘Ahem,’ and addressed his host and hostess.

'Mr. Bushell and Madam,' he said, with a certain stiff formality which perhaps was the only manner which left speech possible to him, 'it is part of our mortal burden to reflect that we have laid it chiefly upon ourselves. One part of my burden is that I helped to bring a heavy and an undeserved trouble upon people whom I value, and people who have borne my injury without an angry word. Even whilst I thought I was doing my duty as a minister of the Word, I was but revenging myself for certain slights and thoughtless witticisms which your now errant son had vented upon me. I spoke in anger and in bitterness, and I spoke, as I have since had reason to believe, on no sufficient grounds. And it has been borne in upon me, my friends, that although it is unhappily beyond my power to undo the wrong I did, it is still my duty to confess it humbly before you, and to beg your Christian forgiveness. I have long since forgiven the blow with which your son retaliated upon my sour impertinences. I trust that he has forgiven me my part. I confess my wrong-doing, and I ask, humbly and with deep sorrow, for your pardon.'

Mrs. Bushell had never been so near disliking the Reverend Paul as she was at that minute, for she had long since formed her judgment and forgiven, and this appeal set the old wound aching.

'Parson,' said Old Joe, 'say no more about it. There was faults all round.'

'Ah, Joseph,' said Mrs. Bushell, with tears in her eyes, 'it's too late now, but I should have been a glad woman at this minute if you'd said me nay when I was that cruel to poor Joe.'

'I'm master i' this house,' said Old Joe, 'and what I ought to ha' done would ha' been to ha' gi'en him a lickin' theer an' then, an' said no more about it.'

When they had time to think about it, husband and wife respected the minister the more for his candid and manly confession, but neither that nor any other reparation could bring back Young Joe, who now began to live in the regard of those three with something of the martyr's halo about him. The neighbourhood knew the story, of course, and the neighbours put their own constructions upon it. Those who went to Ebenezer Chapel, in which edifice the Reverend Paul habitually discoursed, held with their pastor. Those who went to Church, and those who went nowhere—the vast majority—held for the most part with Young Joe, and made a hero of him as well as a martyr. Had the young fellow returned within any reasonable time after his escapade, he would have been encountered by precisely that kind of qualified laudation with which it is now the practice of this enlightened

and steadfast country to greet its home-returning warriors or colonial governors.

In those days of decent poverty when she first gave her hand to Old Joe, and set up housekeeping with him, Rebecca had mastered the practice of all virtues of industry, and even in later years, when her husband became wealthy beyond the wildest and most extravagant hopes of his class, and when she might have surrounded herself with an army of servants had she chosen it, she still performed all but the roughest work of the household with her own hands. I like to think of the erect, personable woman in her afternoon black silk, looking, as she sat in state in the little parlour, almost too lofty for approach. At such times, when the scrubbing, scouring, and dusting, the washing, baking, mending, cooking—whatever may have been the business of the day—was done with, she would sit there above her big Bible or the ‘Holy War,’ in which volume, as I remember, she took an especial and unique delight, and would resign herself to a stern and stately meditation on holy things. Whilst Young Joe was with her he vexed her often, and her heart ached with fear for his future many a time. But now that he was gone and gave no sign, these daylight vigils became a prolonged and prayerful pain to the mother’s heart. Old Joe, who had no taste for parlours, would sit and smoke gloomily and alone, beside the kitchen fire. He too had his dreary vigils, troubled, certainly, by no such spiritual agonies as his wife endured, but unlighted by those flashes of pious hope which sometimes illumined her spirit. Now and then Brother George would look in, and, wooden as he was, some qualms of conscience touched him, beholding the desolation he had helped to bring about. I do not wish, as I have intimated, to paint George in the darkest sort of colours. He had not enough of virtuous instinct to be a villain. There was nothing in him for himself to sin against.

‘It’s the best thing in the world as could happen to him.’ Thus George meditated respecting Young Joe. It is the mean man’s tribute to honour, the rogue’s admission of the beauty of justice, that he cares to justify himself in his own mind. ‘It’ll make a man of him, an’ he’ll have me to thank for it. It’s a precious poor chance I’ve got o’ seein’ that hunderd pound again. Eh dear, but I allays *was* a fool wi’ my money.’ Thus he held his head in the sand, and persuaded himself that his conscience did not see him—an attitude more common than the superficial student might suppose.

It became more and more evident, as time went on, that Old Joe and Rebecca his wife were breaking. Trouble told upon the

woman earlier than upon the man, for though she bore it better, she suffered more intensely. She fell into languor. The household work, once gone through with such swift bustle, had to be committed to a stranger's charge; she spent more of her time in her bedroom, and Old Joe sat, feeling lonelier than ever, by the kitchen fire.

Rebecca, though few people guessed it, had always been strongly attracted to young people. That young people were not attracted to her was natural enough, perhaps, though she felt it to be hard. But now, in this time of her distress, Dinah Banks became her chief comfort. The clumsy servant wench, though animated by the best intentions, was a poor attendant in a sick room. A hippopotamus in clogs might have gone about as lightly, and she had one or two special faculties in the way of tumbling over fire-irons, dropping dishes and the like, which were aggravated into supernatural exercise by her own desire to go about the sick-chamber silently. Dinah, light-footed and soft-handed, was a welcome relief to the sufferer's nerves. The more Dinah came, the more Mrs. Bushell cared to have her there, and the better Dinah loved to wait upon her.

The thing which drew Dinah there, was the hope that she might hear something of her husband. No news came, but at last, on the anniversary of the day of his departure, Mrs. Bushell for the first time spoke of him.

'It's a year to-day,' she said, 'since my poor lad went away.'

Dinah, whose mind was full of the remembrance of the day (for women are your true keepers of anniversaries, and have other saints' days than are set down in the calendar), trembled and turned pale at these simple words. Rebecca, lying with her eyes closed, and her thin hands folded below her chin, went on:—

'We're short-sighted creatures, and there's only one thing as we can be sure of, Dinah. It's all in the Lord's hands.'

Then she lay quiet for a while, and Dinah quivered beside her. For not Joe's desertion of her, nor the failure of his promise, nor the danger of disgrace, nor the fact that fate had stolen her child from her, had weaned her heart from Young Joe. She would believe no ill of him, but dreaded to hear of terrible mischiefs which had happened to him.

'And now,' said the old woman again, 'I shan't be here long, and perhaps I shall know more about it where I'm goin' to.'

'No,' said Dinah, laying a timid hand upon Rebecca's brow, 'you must wait long enough to see him come back again. He can't have the heart to stay away for good, if he's alive,' and at that Dinah broke out crying.

Rebecca opened her eyes, and her hands parted.

'Dinah, my poor gell!' was all she said.

And Dinah, pierced by a sudden revelation of instinct, read the stately heart of the rigid old Calvinist aright and knew its tenderness. She leaned over the bed, and laid her face softly in Rebecca's bosom, and the old woman and the young one cried together.

'I always knowed,' said Rebecca, gliding back into the broadest accent of her childhood, 'as you loved him, an' I know as he loved you. An' he wasn't a bad lad at bottom, Dinah, an' he never meant no harm; an' it was my cruel ways as made him angry wi' religion.' The old woman's tears flowed freely, but she went on with no break in her voice. 'Yo' seek help where help is to be got. Yo'll see him come back again some day, Dinah, an' yo' must tell him as whatever he did as was wrong his mother forgive him afore her died, an' whatever her did as was wrong to him, her asked yo' t'ask him to forget.'

There she ceased again, and lay, stroking Dinah's wet cheek, and feebly drying the girl's eyes. Dinah had an impulse upon her to tell the story of her marriage to Young Joe, and the birth of her son, but was restrained by the sense of Rebecca's weakness, and by some misgiving that without her 'lines' a strict woman like Mrs. Bushell might regard her as an altogether improper sort of person. In a little time she controlled herself, and sat down, once more, beside the bed. For a time both were silent. Rebecca lay with closed eyes like one asleep, and Dinah had risen to steal from the room, when the sick woman turned her head, saying:—

'Dinah, my dear, theer's only one thing as Joe left behind him. Yo'll find it i' the top long drawer i' the next room. It's a grey-coloured coat. Bring it in to me, there's a good gell; I want to see it again before I die. It's the only thing he left behind him.'

Dinah passed into the next room, found the coat, and returned. Rebecca took it from her, unfolded it feebly, and caressed it with her hands.

'It was Joseph's Coat,' she said. 'When the wicked sons pretended as young Joseph was dead, they brought his coat to Jacob: Joseph's Coat. But he was alive all the time in Egypt, and his father lived to see him rich and well-to-do.'

Her mind began to wander, and she fancied that her son stood beside her.

'Yo'll be kind to your father, Joseph,' she said, 'when you come back from Egypt, and yo'll remember as it's my wish as you should marry Dinah.'

Then she slumbered for a while, and Dinah, full of fear and awe, stole downstairs to the kitchen, where Old Joe sat in gloomy silence, with an unlighted pipe between his teeth, and stared into the ashy bars of the grate.

'There's a great change in her, Mr. Bushell,' she said.

Old Joe shook his head sadly.

'I've knowed as it was a-comin',' he said, in a deep inward murmur; 'I've seen it a-comin' this many a day.'

They passed upstairs together. Rebecca still slumbered. They stood for a time on either side of the bed in silence. By-and-by the dying woman opened her eyes languidly, looked round with no recognition, plucked feebly at the coat which lay beneath her hands, and then, with the last ray of intelligence which visited her soul in this world, recognised the garment.

'It was Joseph's Coat,' she said, and with these words she died.

Old Joe bore his wife's death stonily, and no man could tell whether he grieved or not. The funeral took place on Sunday, and the bereaved husband and his brother George were the only mourners. They walked behind the hearse in long hat-bands and black clothes, saw the dead interred in the squalid graveyard of Ebenezer, and went back together.

'Theer was a will I made,' said Old Joe, sitting beside the kitchen fire, 'i' my son's favour.' He rose and took the document of which he spoke from a sham two volumes in folio of the 'History of England,' marked on the inside for a chess-board. 'Me an' Joe,' he said, 'used to play draughts on that. They used to reckon me a pretty good player, but he could beat my yed off. He was a very good draught-player, was Joe.'

He set down the chess-board lingeringly, and tapped it once or twice with his knuckles. Then, seating himself again, he opened the document.

'It was drawed up,' he said, 'by a lawyer, an' all made out proper, this here will was. Everythin' on my Rebecca's death was to goo without reserve to my son Joseph, except a thousand pound to my brother George. And now there don't seem no son Joseph for it to goo to, an' wheer it does goo I don't care.'

At this intimation Brother George's heart experienced a soft and gentle glow. Things were looking well for Brother George. It was a maxim of his that 'fine words butter no parsnips,' but he knew also that they cost nothing, and he expended a few upon his brother's grief.

'Your piternal feelin's, Joseph, as a man might say, is a playin' on your heart-strings. But theer's many a young man as has stopped away for a year as has come back at the end of it, or

leastways, in the course of time. Preaps he mightn't ha' gone to Merriky after all. He might ha' 'listed.'

'He's never wrote to nobody,' said Joe, 'not all the time he's been away.'

'No,' said Brother George, with no token of shame; 'never a word, as I've heerd on.'

The elder brother sat silent, looking at the fire, with his massive hands depending loosely between his knees, and the will held between the finger and thumb of each hand. Without any sign of haste or anger, or any new resolve, he tore the document across leisurely, and with no look of emotion laid the two pieces together and tore them through. Then, in the same listless way, he took the poker, hollowed out the fire a little, pushed the paper fragments into the hollow, and beat down the fire upon them.

Brother George sipped whisky and water to conceal his smile. Any sort of facial demonstration was rare with him, but this action of Old Joe's was, in its way, a foretaste of triumph for the clumsy schemer, and that soft glow of satisfaction warmed his heart so well that he could not keep its reflection from his face. He might have grinned his broadest, for Old Joe never looked at him.

'Twelve months to a day,' said Joe, with his hands still hanging lax before him, and his eyes upon the fire, 'twelve months to a day.'

'What was twelve months to a day?' asked the other.

'From the time he went,' said Old Joe listlessly, 'to the time her died.' Then he said, 'Twelve months to a day' again, and sat silent for a long time.

A man with an atom of perception in him would have been keenly touched—must have been touched—by the complete forlornness of the old man's face, and voice, and attitude; but George, being by nature wooden, and by cultivation hardened, laid an unsympathetic hand upon his brother's shoulder, and congratulated him.

'I am glad to see you bear it so easy, Joe-ziph.'

Old Joe looked at him slowly, dropped his head again, and murmured, 'Twelve months to a day.'

'Have a glass o' grog,' said George. It was not his own liquor, and he could afford to be generous with it. 'It'll warm the cockles of your heart, and do you good.'

He took the kettle from the hearth, mixed a stiff glass, and set it on the hob beside his brother.

'Jones her maiden name was,' said Old Joe. 'We was married at the parish church. A good wife for five-and-thirty years was my Rebecca. A good wife.'

'Yes,' said Brother George, 'her was a fine personable figure

of a woman, and a savin' manager. Yes, Joe, her was all that, an' her's no doubt better off.'

To this genially spoken commendation the widower made no answer. Brother George fell to thinking as to what the mourner's fortune might amount to.

In the silence of the room a murmur broke upon his thoughts.

'Eh?' said George.

'It was a twel'month to a day,' said Old Joe vacantly. 'I bain't well, George,' he added. 'I think I'll goo upstairs an' lay down a bit.'

'Ah, do,' said Brother George. 'And I'll wait here till you've had a rest.'

Old Joe, bent strangely, with his massive arms dependent like weights from his broad shoulders, bored his way slowly out of the room, and went heavily upstairs. George sat absorbed in halcyon visions. Two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Call it two hundred thousand. A wooden man; a dull, slow, unperceptive, unimaginative man. And yet, what visions haunted that dim brain of his and warmed his chilly heart! The summer afternoon wore down to summer evening, and George took a comfortable tea in his brother's parlour, and returning to the kitchen sat and smoked and sipped his grog, until it grew too dark for him to see the wreaths of smoke which curled about his head. He called to the ruddy servant who sat alone in the back kitchen.

'Sarah, go upstairs and call the master, there's a good wench.'

The girl clamped upstairs and tapped at the sleeper's door. There came no answer, and she rapped again. She called downstairs, saying that she could not make him hear.

'He's pretty sound asleep, then,' said Brother George. 'Leave him to it. I'll go away home.'

He put on the crape-bound hat, and walked gravely to his own house, and slept the sleep of the just. His dreams were bright with the gleam of two hundred thousand pounds. He sat at breakfast in the morning, and the sunbeams flowing through the window were mellow with the same auriferous shine. There came a hurried knock at the door, and George's servant, being engaged at the back of the house, left her master to answer it. He found his brother's clumsy Black Country serving-wench standing on the door-step with blanched cheeks and eyes full of terror.

'I've fetched the doctor,' she gasped breathlessly, 'an' he says he must ha' been dead afore you left the house last night.'

George fell back against the wall of the passage.

'Dead!' he gasped; 'who's dead?'

'Your brother Joseph,' said the girl.

HERE THE PROLOGUE CLOSES.

(To be continued.)

A Day with Liszt in 1880.

FRANZ LISZT is one of the few living representatives of that great upheaval of ideas known as the Romantic movement of 1830.

Abroad the new aspirations, cramped in politics, found their solace and ideal fulfilment in the realms of literature and of art. The names of Georges Sand, Alfred de Musset, M. Lamartine, and Hugo; of De Lamennais in religion; of Chopin, Liszt, Berlioz, Wagner in music, are but so many expressions of that suppressed excitement of new life which found its chief vent in literature and art on the Continent, and gave us a new burst of painting and poetry, and the Reform Bill, in England.

The new spirit, the 'Zeitgeist,' the young Impulse, of the nineteenth century, now grown to maturity, was then abroad and busy in overturning kingdoms and theories of art, philosophy, and religion with rigorous impartiality.

There are few survivals of that stirring and romantic epoch. Liszt is amongst them. Once the idol of every capital in the civilised world as an executive musician, he was placed years ago on an unapproachable pedestal.

Few amongst us even who have reached middle life, have heard him play: he belongs to the epoch of Paganini, Malibran, and Lablache—not to the epoch of Titiens, Joachim, and Rubinstein. To have heard him is to have heard a man who in the beginning of this century as completely transformed the school of pianoforte-playing as did Paganini the school of violin-playing. The Liszt method has profoundly influenced even the severer clique of classical experts in Germany; and the greatness and foresight of Liszt is evidenced in the fact that no pianoforte development since has in the least outgrown the impulse given it by him nearly fifty years ago; nor as executants can even Rubinstein or Bülow claim to have done more than offer successive illustrations of the great master's method and manner.

As I drove through the groves of olives brightening with crude berries that clothe the slopes of Tivoli, and entered the gateway which leads up to the ducal Villa d'Este, it was with something of the feeling of a pilgrim who approaches a shrine. Two massive doors open on to a monastic cloister, and the entrance to the villa itself is out of the cloisters, just as the rooms are entered from the cloister of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Here for six years past in the autumn Liszt has led a retired life, varied by occasional excursions to Rome.

I was conducted up a staircase which opened on to a lofty terrace, and thence into a side room, whilst the Swiss valet disappeared to summon the Abbate Liszt. In another moment I saw a side door open, and the venerable figure of Liszt, already for years engraven on my heart, advanced towards me.

It was the same noble and commanding form—with the large finely chiselled features, the restless glittering eye still full of untamed fire, the heavy white hair, thick mantling on the brow and cropped square only where it reached the shoulders, down which I can well imagine it might have continued to flow unchecked like a snowy cataract.

He came forward with that winning smile of *bonhomie* which at once invites cordiality, and drew me to him with both hands, conducting me at once into a little inner sitting-room with a window opening on to the distant Campagna.

The room was dark, and completely furnished with deep red damask—cool and shadowy contrast to the burning sunshine of Italy. After alluding to our last meeting in Wagner's house at Bayreuth, which recalled also the name of Walter Bache, who has worked so bravely for Liszt's music in England, he said, 'Now tell me, how is Bache? I have a particular, quite particular, regard for Bache; he stayed with me here some years ago, and he has been very steadfast in presenting my works in England; and tell me, how is Victor Hugo? and have you seen Renan lately?' I was overwhelmed by these inquiries and the like. I could not give him very good accounts of M. Hugo, whose health I feared was declining; but I said that the last evening I had spent with him in Paris, he had received up to twelve at night, and seemed full of life; although his hours are much earlier now. Of M. Renan I could of course speak much more fully, as he had so recently been in England. 'Renan took me to M. Hugo's when I was in Paris, and we had a delightful evening,' he remarked. After asking after a few other personal friends, he said, 'I am glad to see you here. At this time I have a little more leisure. I escape to this retreat for rest. At Rome I am besieged (*obsédé*) by all sorts of people, with whom I do not care to entertain particular relations—why should I? what have we in common?—they come out of curiosity to stare, that is all; and even here I am worried with callers, who have no interest for me;' and indeed it was current in Rome that the Abbate Liszt would receive no one at Tivoli; and especially ladies were not admitted.

I could not help admiring the situation of the Villa d'Este. 'Indeed,' said Liszt, 'this is quite a princely residence; it is rented by the Cardinal Hohenlöhe, with whom I have had very old and friendly relations; he is good enough to apportion it to me in the autumn; you see his picture hangs there. The place is quite a ruin. It belongs to the Duke of Modena, but of course they can't keep it up now: the Cardinal spent about 2000*l.* to make it habitable. You shall see presently, the terraces are rather rough; I don't often go about the place, but I will come out with you now, and show you some points of view. I lunch about one o'clock; you will stay, and put up with the *hospitalité de garçon*.'

He then led me to the window. Down the slope of a precipitous mountain stretched the Villa d'Este gardens; tall cypress-trees marked the lines of walk and terrace; groves of olive, between which peeped glittering cascades and lower parterres, studded here and there with a gleaming statue, and tall jets of water, eternally spouting, fed from the Marcian springs; the extremity of the park seemed to fade away, at an immense depth, into the billowy Campagna.

It was like an enchanted scene; from the contemplation of which I was roused by the Abbate taking my arm, and, passing through several ante-chambers, we emerged on to the raised terrace, which commanded one of the most striking views in Italy, or the world.

'Round to the left,' said Liszt, 'lies Hadrian's Villa, and perhaps your eyes are good enough to see St. Peter's yonder in the horizon.' The grey mist hung at a distance of eighteen miles over the straggling buildings of distant Rome; but they gleamed out here and there. Beyond these wooded flanks of the mountain; beyond the ruins of villas where Mæcenas and Horace and the Antonines held their revels; beyond the rushing murmur of cascades and fountains; never silent, yet ever making a low and slumbrous melody, lay the Campagna like a vast lake, over which the shadow of cloud and the flicker of sunlight swept and faded out: and again beyond the Campagna, loomed the Eternal City with its mighty dome.

We seemed lifted into the upper air, as on the spacious summit of a lofty precipice; the dry vine leaves hung about the trellised parapets, and the Virginian creeper was just beginning to turn.

Liszt was silent. As I looked at the noble and expressive features, never quite in repose, and strongly marked with the traces of those immense emotions which have been embodied by him in his great orchestral preludes, and thundered by him through every capital in Europe, in the marvellous performances

of his earlier days, I could not help saying, 'If you do not find rest here, you will rest nowhere on earth : ' it was indeed a realm of unapproachable serenity and peace. Then we descended by winding ways, pausing in the long walk, thickly shaded with olive-trees and the beloved ilex, where fifty lions' heads spout fifty streams into an ancient moss-grown tank.

'It is,' said Liszt, 'a retreat for summer: you can walk all day about these grounds, and never fear the sun—all is shade. But come down lower; ' and so we went, at times turning round to look down an avenue, or catch, through the trees, a peep of the glowing horizon beyond.

Presently we came to a central space, led into by four tall cypress groves. Here, up from a round sheet of water in front of us, leapt four jets to an immense height; and here we rested, whilst the Abbate gave me some account of this Villa or Château d'Este, and its former owners, which differed not greatly from what may be found in most guide-books.

As we re-ascended, the bell of Sta. Croce, in the tall campanile over the cloisters which form part of the Villa d'Este, rang out a quarter to one.

It was a bad bell, like most Italian bells, and I naturally alluded to the superiority of Belgian bells, above all others. Rather to my surprise, Liszt said, 'Yes, but how are they played? I remember being much struck by the Antwerp carillon.' I described to him the mechanism of the carillon clavecin and tambour, and reminded him that the Antwerp carillon was much out of tune, Bruges being superior, as well as of heavier calibre, and Mechlin bearing off the palm for general excellence. We stopped short on one of the terraces, and he seemed much interested with a description I gave him of a performance by the great carillonneur M. Denyn at Mechlin, and which reminded me of Rubinstein at his best. He expressed surprise when I alluded to Van den Gheyn's compositions for bells, laid out like regular fugues and organ voluntaries, and equal in their way to Bach or Handel, who were contemporaries of the great Belgian organist and carillonneur. 'But,' he said, 'the Dutch have also good bells. I was once staying with the King in Holland, and I believe it was at Utrecht that I heard some bell music which was quite wonderful.' I have listened myself to that Utrecht carillon, which is certainly superior, and is usually well handled.

We had again reached the upper terrace, where the Abbate's mid-day repast was being laid out by his valet. It was a charming situation for lunch, commanding that wide and magnificent prospect to which I have alluded; but autumn was far advanced,

there was a fresh breeze, and the table was ordered indoors. Meanwhile, Liszt laying his hand upon my arm, we passed through the library, opening into his bedroom, and thence to a little sitting-room (the same which commanded that view of the Campagna). Here stood his grand Erard piano. 'As we were talking of bells,' he said, 'I should like to show you an "Angelus" which I have just written;' and opening the piano, he sat down. This was the moment which I had so often and so vainly longed for.

When I left England, it seemed to me as impossible that I should ever hear Liszt play, as that I should ever see Mendelssohn, who has been in his grave for thirty-three years. How few of the present generation have had this privilege! At Bayreuth, I had hoped, but no opportunity offered itself, and it is well known that Liszt can hardly ever be prevailed upon to open the piano in the presence of strangers. A favourite pupil, Polig, who was then with him at the Villa d'Este, told me he rarely touched the piano, and that he himself had seldom heard him—'but,' he added with enthusiasm, 'when the master touches the keys, it is always with the same incomparable effect, unlike anyone else: always perfect.'

'You know,' said Liszt, turning to me, 'they ring the "Angelus" in Italy carelessly; the bells swing irregularly, and leave off, and the cadences are often broken up thus:' and he began a little swaying passage in the treble—like bells tossing high up in the evening air: it ceased, but so softly that the half-bar of silence made itself felt, and the listening ear still carried the broken rhythm through the pause. The Abbate himself seemed to fall into a dream; his fingers fell again lightly on the keys, and the bells went on, leaving off in the middle of a phrase. Then rose from the bass the song of the Angelus, or rather, it seemed like the vague emotion of one who, as he passes, hears in the ruins of some wayside cloister the ghosts of old monks humming their drowsy melodies, as the sun goes down rapidly, and the purple shadows of Italy steal over the land, out of the orange west!

We sat motionless—the disciple on one side, I on the other. Liszt was almost as motionless: his fingers seemed quite independent, chance ministers of his soul. The dream was broken by a pause; then came back the little swaying passage of bells, tossing high up in the evening air, the half-bar of silence, the broken rhythm—and the Angelus was rung.

Luncheon being announced, we rose, and Liszt, turning to his young friend Polig, who occupies an apartment at Este, and enjoys the great master's help in his musical studies: 'Go, dear friend,' he said, 'and join us in about an hour—nay, sooner if you will.'

So we sat down in the cozily furnished little sitting-room - dark, like all the Abbate's suite of apartments, and evidently intended to shut out the sun.

I was still heated with our clambering walk, and Liszt insisted on my keeping on my great-coat, and provided me in addition with a priest's silken skull-cap, playfully remarking, 'As you call me "Abbate," I shall address you as "Il Reverendo," and whenever you come here, you will find this priest's cap ready for you.'

The '*hospitalité de garçon*' proved anything but ascetic. A vegetable soup, macaroni with tomato sauce, a faultless beef-steak or '*bistecco*' dressed with fried mushrooms, cooked dry; a peculiar salad, composed of a variety of herbs in addition to leeks, onions, lettuce, and fruit, the like of which I can never hope to taste until I lunch again with the Abbate at the Villa d'Este.

We were alone. I need not say that, in such company, the wines seemed to me to possess an ideal fragrance and a Sicilian flavour wholly unlike and incomparably superior to the heavy vintages of Spain. There were some questions about Mendelssohn and Chopin that I had always wished to ask; but at first the conversation was much more general. We spoke of the curious recent fancy of the Italians for Wagner's music; the way his operas had been produced at Bologna, and just then '*Rienzi*' at Rome. 'Yes,' he said; 'the Italians are beginning to understand more kinds of melody than one; they perceive, perhaps, that Wagner's melody pervades each part of his score, so that you can have a *mélodie à plusieurs étages*. This notion of 'a melody in flats,' or 'of several stories,' struck me as most apt, as well as humorous. Speaking of Wagner, I related to him an unhappy occasion on which I had been requested by Lord — to try and prevail on Wagner, when in England, to accompany me to his house one night, where we were to meet a royal princess most anxious to see Wagner. I reluctantly undertook the mission, but failed to induce the great Maestro to go with me, and so was placed in the unpleasant position of having to apologize on my arrival for his absence. 'Ah!' said Liszt, laughing, 'a similar thing occurred to me lately: some royalties at Sienna asked me to get Wagner to meet them; but I knew Wagner better, and at once declined to charge myself with that commission. Your mention of Lord — reminds me that I knew him years ago; indeed, in my young days, I was on one occasion at his house, and, curiously enough, a regrettable event occurred to me also. Some ladies present importuned me to play. I was not unwilling, but I did not quite care for the manner in which I was pressed, and I declined; indeed, I believe I left the house rather abruptly. Well, it was a time

when I was playing a good deal in the various capitals of Europe, and much more fuss was being made with me than was perhaps necessary ; and then, you know, I was much younger, and I dare say acted hastily ; but I have always regretted it.'

He spoke very little of his extraordinary successes when at his zenith, which can only be compared to the sensation produced by Paganini. But he spoke with pride of having received the celebrated kiss of Beethoven. 'Ay,' he said, 'when I was a very young man, and in public too, it was difficult to get the great man to go and hear rising talent ; but my father got Schindler to induce Beethoven to come and hear me—and he embraced me before the whole company.' A similar event occurred to Joachim, who, when a boy, received the public embrace of Mendelssohn after playing a fugue of Bach's.

Liszt spoke in the highest terms of Herr Richter, at the same time regretting that the Wagner Festivals at the Albert Hall had not been financially more successful.

Having been accused, in America and elsewhere, of misrepresenting the relations between Wagner and Meyerbeer, and knowing that Wagner will never mention Meyerbeer's name, nor allow anyone to speak of him in his presence, I asked Liszt whether it was true that Meyerbeer had introduced Wagner to M. Joly in Paris, with a view to bringing out his 'Flying Dutchman,' knowing all the time that M. Joly was on the point of bankruptcy. 'Well,' said Liszt, 'that is probably true. No one is exactly to blame, if a young unknown man fails to arrive at once at the Grand Opera de Paris ; getting up a work there is a question of many months and thousands of pounds. Wagner's libretto was bought for a small sum, his music discarded, and he was practically turned adrift. Afterwards, he was notoriously forced to live by arranging Italian opera tunes for the piano and cornet-à-piston. It is possible that Meyerbeer may have been of some small use to Wagner at first, but Wagner will not hear of him. Mendelssohn had the same antipathy.' Now I saw another opportunity : 'I have often wondered, in reading Mendelssohn's letters,' I said, 'why his allusions to you are so brief and so few ; here and there, we read that you were of the company, that the evening was delightful, and that you or Chopin played ; and Mendelssohn seems to have little more to say, though in his allusions to many of his great contemporaries he is often explicit and detailed enough.' 'Ah ! well,' said Liszt, 'Mendelssohn's letters have been, to some extent, what is called arranged and selected for publication. There is a good deal which it was not advisable to print, or that couldn't be printed ; and then there was something between me and Mendelssohn : I am

sure I don't quite know what; but at one time, a certain coolness sprang up between us; it was, however, much more between our followers than between us. Mendelssohn did not get on with the French: at Paris, for instance, and with reason there; then, at Berlin and Leipsic too he had his difficulties with the musical authorities, some of whom were certainly my friends. The first time I saw Mendelssohn was at Berlin; I called in the morning, about twelve o'clock; he was charming, full of life and vigour, and received me joyously. Madame Mendelssohn pressed me to stay to lunch, and, meaning to go, I still stayed on talking and playing, till suddenly it was six o'clock, and then he said, "Now you must stay and dine." So I staid, and left about nine o'clock, after a delightful day; then the next time we met, we had some words about Meyerbeer, whom Mendelssohn could not endure, and I spoke rather hotly. I dare say I was in the wrong, but somehow, from that time, we ceased to be quite so cordial, and we did not meet very often; but there was no rupture or quarrel between us, none ever; our partisans quarrelled; but between us personally there was never any real animosity. And then quite late in his career, a year before he died, Mendelssohn did a very graceful little thing. He brought me a MS. of Beethoven, a chorus copied in Beethoven's hand out of Mozart's 'Don Juan'; he knew it was the kind of thing I should value very highly, and he bade me keep it for his sake. Well, I was travelling about—I gave it with other things into my mother's keeping, and I suppose it was shown about, and some one stole it; at any rate, it disappeared; but I always like to remember it, because it proved that, notwithstanding the serious differences which had arisen between our schools and methods before his death, personally he felt kindly towards me down to the last.'

The conversation turning on Heine—'Of course I knew Heine. He was one of those original eccentrics whom it is difficult to class: his reputation was a *célébrité d'auberge*. Yes, he alluded to me in some of his prose works not unkindly. I had the misfortune (*maladresse*) to set one of his songs to music.'

'How few good poems there are suitable for music!'

'Yes, and how little good music!'

Of Paganini he said, 'No one who has not heard him can form the least idea of his playing. The fourth-string performances, the tunes in harmonics, and the arpeggios used as he used them, were then all new to the public and the players too; they sat staring at him open-mouthed. Every one can play his music now, but the same impression can never again be made.'

Of Bottesini, the double bass soloist, he said, 'He is the only great player of my time whom I have never heard.'

Liszt was very humorous upon vamped-up reputations, and the airs and graces which musicians give themselves.

'After a bit, in England at least, you must be "dignified"—that is a good word; the English like a "dignified professor!"' and he drew himself up like a very Pecksniff, put on a look of solemn and dictatorial gravity, lifting both hands sideways as it were to keep off all common intruders.

Speaking of Bülow and of Rubinstein, he said, 'They are two men who stand quite apart from all the rest; still, the general level of pianoforte-playing has immensely risen within the last twenty years. There is, however, a good deal of "humbug" about some professional reputations; and pretending to hold very carefully a watering-pot, he added, 'Some reputations take a good deal of judicious watering. I could mention some who had the good fortune to marry people who watered them beautifully in the newspapers. It makes some difference, you know. I don't say that you can create a reputation without talent; but the "humbug" is too often at top, and the "talent" at the bottom; and in England you are miserably taken in by foreigners. It is your own fault; but the way mediocre foreign talent has been over and over again pushed in England—especially bad singers—is simply scandalous.'

How interesting it would be to read the memoirs and criticisms of Liszt upon music and musicians for the last fifty years! No one living, perhaps, with the exception of Professor Ella, has such a rich store of musical experience and incident to fall back upon.

'I have often wished,' I said, 'that you had written more of your recollections of those great musicians, artists, and poets with whom you have been connected.' I alluded to his charming Life of Chopin. 'Ah!' he said abruptly, 'Chopin had no life, properly speaking; his was an exclusive, self-centred personality. He lived inwardly—he was silent and reserved, never said much, and people were often deceived about him, and he never undeceived them. People talk of the "*style*" of Chopin, the "*touch*" of Chopin, and of playing like Chopin. When he played himself, he played admirably well, and especially his own compositions; but he was supposed to have formed a school of Chopinites, who had the Tradition—and you heard that Mr. *This*, and Madame *That*—they alone could play like Chopin—he had formed them—people danced round them, and they affected to have the true Chopin secret. Yes,' he said, 'it was absurd enough; and Chopin looked on, and said nothing; he was very diplomatic—he never troubled himself to stop this cant, and to this day there may be those who play "like Chopin"—who have received the sacred "Tradition." C'était

comme cela du commencement, ce n'était pas l'école, c'était plutôt "l'église de Chopin!" The last words were pronounced in a solemn tone, and with a look of mock gravity indescribably humorous. As he rose from table, Liszt said, 'You spoke of my sketch of Chopin—I have just brought out a new edition of it at Leipsic.' We went into the library, and he gave me a handsome quarto volume of 312 pages, printed in French on fine paper; 'Take it,' he said; 'you will find some forty pages more than in the edition you have read.' I opened the volume, and on the frontispiece found that Liszt had written aslant.

'Au révérend Hugh Reginald Haweis, affectueux souvenir de la Villa d'Este.

'November 17,

'80.

'F. LISZT.'

I had conceived, ever since I had studied the life and works of Chopin, the greatest desire to hear him played by Liszt: indeed, the number of those still living who have had this privilege must be very limited. I ventured to say, 'Chopin always maintained that you were the most perfect exponent of his works. I cannot say how grateful I should be to hear, were it only a fugitive passage of Chopin's, touched by your hand.' 'With all the pleasure in the world,' replied the immortal pianist; and again I sat down by the grand piano, and humming to him a phrase of op. 37, I begged that it might be that. 'I will play that, and another after it.' (The second was op. 48.)

It is useless for me to attempt a description of a performance every phrase of which will be implanted in my memory, and on my heart, as long as I live.

Again, in that room, with its long bright window opening out into the summer-land, we sat in deep shadow—in perfect seclusion; not a sound, but the magic notes falling at first like a soft shower of pearls or liquid drops from a fountain—blown spray falling hither and thither, and changing into rainbow tints in its passage, as the harmonic progression kept changing, and tossing the fugitive fragments of melody with which that exquisite nocturne opens, until it settles into the calm, happy dream, which seems to rock the listener to sleep with the deep and perfect benison of ineffable rest; then out of the dream, through a few bars, like the uneasy consciousness of a slowly awakening sleeper, and again the interlude, the blown rain of double pearls—until once more the heavenly dream is resumed. I drew my chair gently nearer, I almost held my breath, not to miss a note. There was a strange

concentrated anticipation about Liszt's playing, unlike anything I had ever heard—not for a moment could the ear cease listening; each note seemed prophetic of the next, each yielded in importance to the next: one felt that in the soul of the player the whole nocturne existed from the beginning—as one and indivisible, like a poem in the heart of a poet. The playing of the bars had to be gone through seriatim; but there were glimpses of a higher state of intuition, in which one could read thoughts without words, and possess the soul of music, without the intervention of bars and keys and strings; all the mere elements seemed to fade, nothing but perception remained. Sense of time vanished; all was as it were realised in a moment, that moment the Present—the eternal Present—no Past, no Future. Yet I could not help noticing each incident: the perfect effortless independence of the fingers, mere obedient ministers of the master's thought; the complete trance of the player—living in the ideal world, and reducing the world of matter about him to the flimsiest of unreal shadows; and I had time to notice the unconscious habits of the master, which have already passed into historic mannerisms in his disciples, like Cardinal Newman's stooping gait, or Victor Emmanuel's toss of the head. So I noted the first finger and thumb drawn together to emphasize a note, or the fingers doubled up, or lifted in a peculiar manner, with a gentle sweep in the middle of a phrase—things in which those are determined to be like the master who can be like him in nothing else; also the peculiar repercussion resonance, since reduced to something like a science by Rubinstein, and the caressing touch, which seems to draw the soul of the piano out of it almost before the finger reaches the key-board. When Liszt passed silently to op. 48, he arrived at some stiff bravura passages, which called forth his old vigour. Yet here all was perfect; not a note slurred over or missed; the old thunder woke beneath his outstretched hands; the spirits of the vasty deep were as obedient as ever to their master's call. With the last chord, he rose abruptly; abruptly we came out of the dim enchanted land of dreams; the common light of day was once more around me. 'Now you must be off!' he exclaimed; indeed, I had barely time to catch my tram for Rome; 'but,' he added, 'I have something I wish you to take to Bache and Dannreuther;' and he took out three bronze medals, giving me the third to keep the design was by a Roman artist of great merit. On one side was Liszt's own profile, on the other a star-crowned Fame holding a palm-branch.

Before I left, I asked Liszt if I might give some account in print of the delightful day I had spent in his company, so that

the hearts of his many friends and admirers in England might be gladdened by some account of him.

‘Whatever you will,’ he good-naturedly replied; ‘write what you like, and let me see it when it appears.’

Liszt changes his residence three times every year: from Rome to Weimar, from Weimar to Pesth, and at Pesth he is usually occupied in bringing out or conducting some of his works. Although probably nothing will ever induce the magician of the pianoforte to play in public again, notwithstanding his marvellous retention of execution and nervous energy, it is to be hoped that he may still be induced to visit England, where his name has already become a tradition like that of Malibran (to whom he always said he owed so much), or Paganini, with whom he has been popularly classed. And now that his orchestral works are getting hold of the musical world here, and that every season pianoforte recitals rest for their main sensations on his unique compositions, we cannot doubt what sort of reception he would meet with in London, could he be persuaded to come over and conduct, or even superintend, one of his orchestral preludes. But Liszt hates the sea; indeed, I am told that he objects even to going over the suspension bridge at Florence. I ventured to say to him, ‘In England we have heard of Liszt, but already he is a kind of mythus. “His legend,” as M. Renan would say, “has begun to form.” People are beginning to ask, Was there indeed ever such a person? Come over and prove to us that he still exists.’ But he only shook his head. ‘I am too old; I cannot come to England.’

Will he come?

H. R. HAWES.





From Windsor Bridge.



Rambles about Eton.

II.

THE view of the Thames here given is from Windsor Bridge, which is a continuation of High Street. It has three arches, and joins the counties of Berkshire and Buckingham. Maidenhead Bridge is seven miles above, and Staines Bridge about eight below. There are many beautiful bends in the river here, and it may be said to have a character almost entirely its own. The Dee and the Wye, two of our most charming streams, differ in every respect, and the Severn has but few points of resemblance. The peculiarity of the Thames here seems to be that it never loses its rustic character, although so many palatial residences fringe its banks. The lilies and wild flowers, and the trees of matchless beauty, the barges and old-fashioned ferries, and the country inns and cottages seem always to preserve that.

I have just read some remarks by a celebrated authority on art, in which he says that internal comfort and sanitary regulations are incompatible with picturesqueness, and that where one exists the other must be sought in vain. Gainsborough, he said, or Constable, found out the most dilapidated examples of cottages that were quite innocent of the painter's or whitewasher's brush, and where the only colouring was what nature gave them; moss, lichens, and weather stains. But it seems to me that though very often there are picturesque combinations of colour, and even shape, in these tumble-down abodes, squalor is by no means necessary for an artistic brush. The animals that Morland used to paint so truthfully are not such as we can dwell on with pleasure, and the stables and styes in which they are housed make us feel as if we could pity them. The horses and dogs of Landseer are not only, of course, more pleasant to look at, but they are quite as picturesque. And so, along the Thames are many cottages which are not only all that could be desired for residences, but they are as artistic as the most fervid admirer of rustic beauty could desire.

Romney Island is visible from this bridge, and it extends down the river for about three-quarters of a mile, until it reaches the Playing Fields of Eton. Romney lock is entered by a cutting on the right hand side of the island, and the Eton masters' bathing-house is at the weir on the left.

If we continue our journey up the Thames to Maidenhead, we shall be able to take the Great Western train to High Wycombe,

though, as there is so much to be seen about Wycombe, it will be necessary to make another trip. A place called Monkey Island is soon reached, and from it is a ferry to Buck's Bank. Monkey Island is interesting from its associations, rather than from any merit in the designs from which it takes its name. On it was a fishing box of the third Duke of Marlborough, and it was his ingenious fancy to have it fitted up with canvas on which are depicted monkeys doing the work of men. There are great numbers of them fishing, shooting, and hunting; and the whole design was in keeping with the depraved taste of the days when the most uncouth swineherds, or their wives, were alluded to as shepherds or shepherdesses, with classic names from Horace or Ovid, and all that was real or hearty had no sympathy from the critics or savants. Yet some money must have been spent over this fishing box, for the lodge is built of cut stone of the best quality and workmanship, and of very excellent design. The present billiard room was formerly a banqueting hall, and has seen many revels, characterised by more or less respectability. It contains an enriched ceiling, which unhappily is now falling into decay.

The stream round this island is clear and rapid, and there is always excellent fishing for various kinds of fish. Clermont is said to have been the name of the artist of the monkeys. He was a Frenchman, and there are very few that desire to deprive him of the honour. A little more than half a mile will bring us to Bray lock, and above this is Bray Church, and the George Hotel, which is on the water's edge. Taplow is almost a suburb of Maidenhead, and delightfully pleasant. The house called Taplow Court is a seat of the Grenfell family. It contains many pictures of great value, including a Titian, a Giulio Romano, and several Turners. The old parish church was here, and its site is still marked by a cross. The mansion was rebuilt about thirty years since, from the designs of Mr. Burne. The lanes about here abound with choice specimens of butterflies, and many a collection has been made by students at Eton, which they prize in their after-life, and which has been the means of calling their attention to natural history in the first instance. Unhappily, the white cabbage butterfly is among the most common, and its ravages in old gardens among cauliflowers and savoy are but too well known. The butterflies of our lanes cannot of course compare in brilliancy with the gorgeous Lepidoptera of foreign countries, any more than our wrens or robins can compare with the dazzling hues of tropical humming-birds, but we have some of great beauty and richness of colour, that when neatly arranged form a charming collection. In the lanes between Eton and Taplow we find the brimstone butterfly, the *Polyommatus*

tus or blue butterfly, the tortoise-shells (*Vanessa polychlorus*), and the beautiful peacock and red-admiral. The former is marked exactly like the eye of a peacock's feather—which used to be so prized by salmon-fishermen, and it may be seen in early spring and late autumn; but the latter is in perfection in September. The painted-lady is also to be met with here, though it is not common in other parts of England. The colours are rather less vivid, but richer and softer in combination. The Burnham woods are quite a paradise for butterflies of the rarer kinds, and if you approach one that has settled you will see it expand and close its wings, possibly on the same principle that induces a peacock to open its tail. For every colour on the beautiful wings of a butterfly is quite visible to it. The wonderful eyes contain compound lenses of many thousands in number, and these are capable of refracting a ray of light proceeding from any object. To enumerate the many varieties of Lepidoptera that can be found between Eton and Maidenhead would not only be foreign to the present scheme, but impossible in our limits, as nearly every known kind is met with, not excluding the Camberwell-beauty (*Vanessa antiopa*), that is regarded as almost as great a prize by collectors as a Chelsea cup is by 'China maniacs.' Its appearance is rather uncertain, and in some years no specimen can be procured; but the willows that fringe the Thames about here are the most likely parts of England to find it, if it is out at all. Nor are the lanes about here less prolific in moths, than they are in butterflies. There is the gorgeous emperor moth (*Saturnia carpi*), which much resembles the peacock butterfly in its markings, but by many it would be considered to have a richer appearance. Then there is the goat moth, which, though not so common with us as it is in some countries, is quite common enough. Its caterpillars are shocking lovers of wood, and if it were as numerous with us as the white cabbage butterfly, our noble branching park trees would be terribly thinned down; and while on this subject, the writer must be pardoned for giving an example of the damage that two plain-looking butterfly-moths can do to a garden.

He lived for some time in Canada, and attached to the house where he lived was a very fine orchard, probably forty years old. It covered some two acres, and the proprietor had stocked it with the choicest trees. Fameuse, St. Lawrence Beauties, Rusticoats, and peach-flavoured apples were all there, and so great was the yield that the surplus sold for a large sum of money. But there had always in former days been care taken to rid the trees of caterpillars. The one which blights an orchard is deposited in the ovate state in rings half an inch long, that completely envelop some

small spray, generally difficult to approach. They are pictures of neatness, and are covered over with an impenetrable varnish, which no storms can wash off—and no arctic cold can hurt the embryo caterpillars. There are about three hundred, or rather more, in each ring, and the sun that melts the ice and snow of the winter, and develops the early buds of May, develops also these tyrants; as soon as they are hatched, they swarm up every branch that shows a bud, and travel over an orchard in an incredibly short time. The land that before them was a garden of Eden is behind them a desolate wilderness. For one year the place was vacant, and a third of the orchard was destroyed. However, to continue the digression, Parliament was applied to, and readily granted a ‘Small Birds Protection Act,’ and in early spring the grackles and other birds that used to be shot down by French Canadian youths reappeared, and slaughtered the destroyers by millions.

If further apology is necessary for this digression, it must be found in the circumstance that the readers of these papers live in all parts of England, and so many of them are interested in the preservation of both fruit and shade trees; and the use birds are of to this desirable end cannot be too well known.

When I saw the ravages that were committed by the caterpillars, I had been reading in an English natural history how some colonial governor had imported starlings to a West India Island to thin some plague of vermin that were making havoc with the crops. And then we looked for the grackles and robins,—a bird about the size of a thrush, and belonging to the thrush tribe. These perched on the small branches and gorged themselves with the small caterpillars. This I mentioned to one of the ministers, either the Minister of Agriculture or the Secretary of State, I cannot remember which, but he reported the matter to his colleagues, and almost at once a request was made that I should send the outline of a scheme that could be drafted into a bill, which bill passed through three readings and became law as soon as the forms could be complied with that made it a statute; and I had the satisfaction of being required to explain this before Mr. Auberon Herbert’s Committee in the English House of Commons. The English form is not so good as the Canadian, because the list of protected birds is given, in place of protecting all, and enumerating the exceptions only, such as wild pigeons, hawks, and sparrows (?); so that there is a list of hundreds in place of four or five species to remember.

The many moths and butterflies, as before said, it would not be possible now to begin even to enumerate, but the naturalist will find all he requires in ‘Newman’s British Moths’ and Mr. Stainton’s work. The subject is also pleasantly alluded to in Mr. J. E. Taylor’s

'Half-Hours in the Green Lanes.' Moths, if nicely arranged and not spoiled of their down, may be made to form even a more pleasing case than butterflies, they are so exceedingly soft and velvety. The best way to show them is to line the case with black velvet, instead of white paper, as is so often done; the paler shades are thus thrown out in fine contrast. There is no moth, however homely, which if it is so exhibited does not look well.

To resume the thread of our journey, however, we may be supposed to have arrived at Maidenhead, and to take the Great Western train to High Wycombe, one of the principal towns in Buckinghamshire, and one of the most pleasant.

Wycombe is sometimes called Chipping Wycombe. Chipping is a common affix to market-towns; we have, for example, Chipping Camden with its old market canopy, and Chipping Norton with its old church and grammar-school, Chipping Ongar with the church partly built of Roman bricks, as others in the neighbourhood are, and Chipping Sodbury, with many more. It indicates a market-town. Mr. Langley regrets that he could not find a Roman tessellated pavement that was discovered in the grounds of Wycombe Abbey, and was copied, he says, 'by Mr. Rowell, a painter. It was diversified with a great variety of work, in small squares of several colours, and in the centre was the figure of a wild beast. This is the whole I have been able to collect on the subject.' Roman coins have been found in the neighbourhood; one of the Emperor Nerva, some of Antoninus Pius and of Marcus Aurelius were found with the tessellated pavement. All this pavement has however been exposed again to view by Lord Carington, to whom the soil belongs.

Wycombe Abbey, his seat, was formerly called Loakes manor-house, and in a compendious history of Wycombe, which was published by Thomas Langley in 1797, it is described as an 'ancient irregular building near the borough, built about the time of James I, but considerably enlarged by Lord Shelburne soon after he purchased it. The rooms, though appropriate to domestic convenience, have little decoration, and few pictures worthy of notice.' Still, even in this condition it had its history and its associations, and it might with a very little adaptation have been made to fit itself to the necessities of the present day. One feels regret indeed to think that Wyatt has substituted a raw modern quasi-gothic building; but the park is simply grand, and the trees in it are of very great beauty indeed.

The view given overleaf is just below the town, and the river Wick adds greatly to the beauty of the scene. Near the church is Wycombe market, which was built at the expense of Lord Shel-

burne in 1757; it superseded a very interesting black and white building, not unlike some of those we see in Shropshire and Hereford—which we can hardly help regretting, as such a building in such a place would have been marvellously picturesque, and it would, with the least care, have been quite as substantial as the one that has been built in its place. Still, the new building is not



Wycombe Abbey.

deficient in picturesqueness, and we might perhaps let the description of it which Langley gives in his *History of Buckinghamshire* pass without challenge; 'it is a pleasing brick building.' When the sketch was made for this series certain alterations were being carried on, and it was considered better to represent these than to show some finish that might not be accurate. The town gains

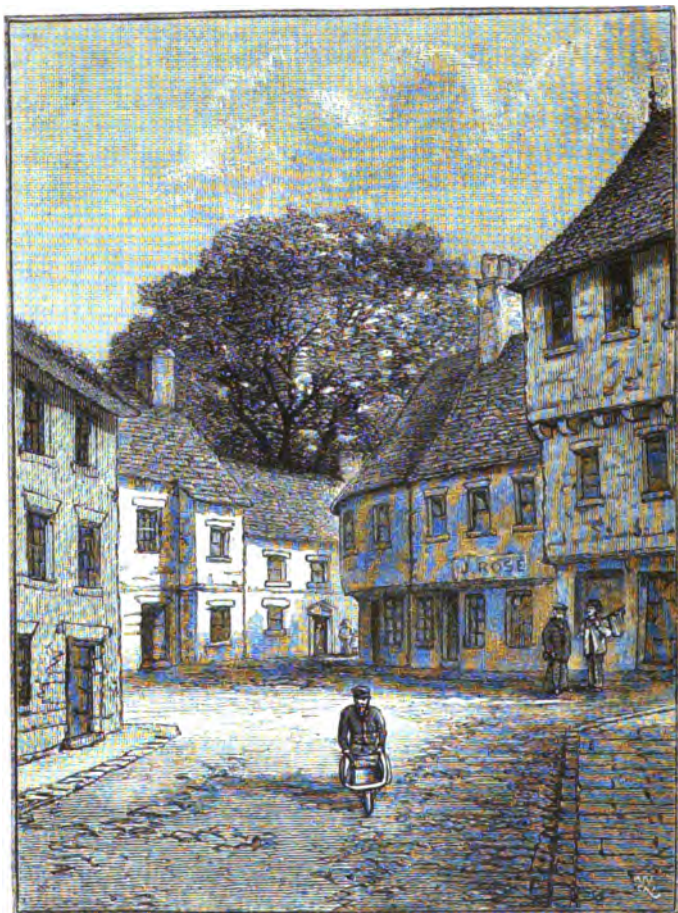
greatly by the river Wick, that runs through it and turns in its course many mills. Ruskin has often pointed out not only the superior thrift and economy of water mills, but also their greater beauty, and to this must be added the purer atmosphere that surrounds them, for if the same power that drives the mills on the Wick and its neighbour the Rye were obtained by means of steam, the leaves of many a tree and many a flower would be blighted. Wycombe does not seem to have had much political importance until the ill-starred reign of Charles, when it sided with the popular cause, and was besieged by Prince Rupert, and Scott, who was one of the judges to try Rupert's master, was among its defenders. There are some singular epitaphs in the chancel of the church: one to John Bigg is a tribute of his wife. 'Devoted by Anne Bigg to



Market-place, High Wycombe.

the lasting memory of her dear husband John Bigg, doctor of physick. He was a constant and true member of the Church of England, a prudent and loyal subject, very temperate, perfectly chaste; a maker of peace both in his private capacity and in his public offices for the borough and county, of a charitable and even temper, never uttering a word like an oath or a curse, very ingenious, eminent and successful in his profession, a most affectionate husband, a tender father, whose example through all the stages of life is most worthy of imitation. He died 15th June 1701, aged 58 years, survived by one son and two daughters, Aune and Catherine.' On the north side of the chancel is a very large monument to the memory of Henry Petty, Earl of Sherborne, erected by his executors, and

consisting of the following singular devices, which are duly recorded by the faithful chronicler Langley. 'A man lying on a cist of black marble, with Religion holding an open book before him. On the right hand are two female figures, Virtue and Learning, directing a child; on the left a Roman warrior and Charity. The canopy is supported by two large pillars of grey



Lane in Wycombe.

marble; on the top is an urn, on either side Prudence and Justice.' Not a very hopeful design, certainly, for a monument, but very characteristic of the period when, as at Westminster, the figures of statesmen and divines and authors are executing a grim dance of death, assisted by heathen deities, though the tableau is not for a moment comparable with Holbein's 'Dance of

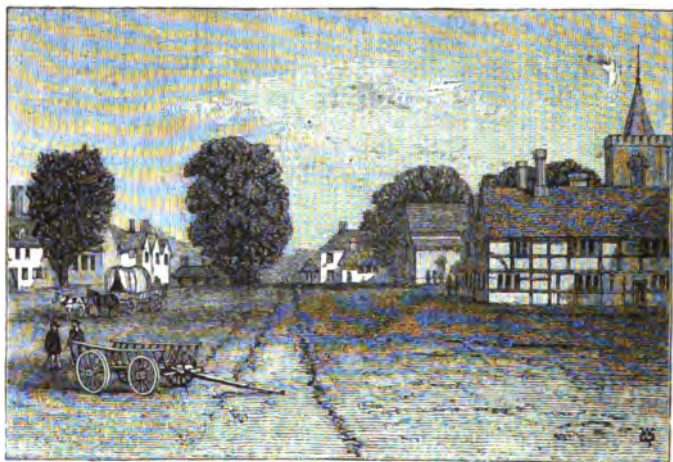
Death.' Rickman differs from Langley in the date he gives to the tower by seven years. He says 'the tower (date 1529), the piers and arches, the clerestory and timber roof are Perpendicular, the battlements and pinnacles of the tower are modern stucco-work erected by Lord Shelburne 1755. Most of the exterior walls, the south porch, and several windows are good Early Decorated. There are portions of the rood-loft, and some very good wood screen work, dated 1468, remaining. The arches to the transept are earlier than those of the nave, and the details of the earlier windows and doors are very good. Part of the walling is flint and chalk, in small squares, similar to the style we find in Norfolk and some parts of Kent. But before taking leave of this church we should notice another epitaph, which is very characteristic of the period when it was composed. It is to one Robert Kemp, and is on a brass plate in the chancel, date 1621 :

Wife, children, wealth, this world and life forsaken,
In silent dust I sleep, when once awaken—
My Saviour's might a glorious change will give;
So losing all, I gain, and dying, live.
My fame I trust the world with, for 'tis true,
Posterity gives every man his due.

Wycombe formerly returned two members to Parliament, but now it only sends one, who is generally a connection of the owner of Wycombe Abbey. In the latter part of the seventeenth century John Archdale was returned as one of the members, but his election was set aside because he refused, being a Quaker, to take the necessary oaths. But a much more notable man was Waller, the poet, who represented Amersham at the age of seventeen, and who afterwards sat for High Wycombe. He was born in 1605, and died 1687. He received his education at Eton, and its natural successor in those days, King's College, Cambridge. Waller married a daughter of Edward Banks, Esq., a very opulent London citizen, and this he managed to do against great odds, for a rival was in the field before him, who was supported by Royal favour. He was an ardent Royalist, though he could change his opinions almost as gracefully as the Vicar of Bray—and quite as easily. But after Charles had surrendered, Waller attempted to enter into a conspiracy to place the Tower of London and part of the City at his disposal. Through the clemency of Cromwell, a clemency which he was always anxious to exercise when it could be done with due regard to public safety, he was only condemned in costs of 10,000*l.* to the State, and one year's imprisonment. After this he retired to France, and stayed for some time in Paris, but he obtained leave from Cromwell to revisit England, and in retirement wrote some charming odes; 'Go, lovely Rose,' is probably one of the best known

So insinuating was he, that he actually gained the friendship and favour of Cromwell after his return. He took up his abode at an old-fashioned seat at Beaconsfield, near Wycombe, and a monument is erected to him at Beaconsfield Church—where he was buried. Notwithstanding his beautiful poems, Clarendon rates him at a low ebb, even though he succeeded in gaining the favour of the Protector, and says that his principal forte was dexterous and servile flattery of the ruling powers.

Within an easy hour's walk from this old town, is situated West Wycombe. Everyone will remember West Wycombe, from its long caverns, which were excavated by Lord le Despenser—with some ulterior views, the country people imagine, but really to get out chalk. West Wycombe House is the seat of the Dashwood



Beaconsfield Village-Green.

family; Lord le Despenser was Francis Dashwood, who founded the club that was a disgrace to the last century. He was a man of notoriously bad life, and probably had acquired an undue influence over his younger fellows. This club seems to have been composed of young men of weak intellect, who habited themselves as Franciscan friars, and affected some mystery in their pursuits. Langley says 'some few years since the house was tenanted by a society of young men of wit and fashion, under the title of monks of St. Francis, whose habit they assumed. During the season of their conventual residence, they are supposed not to have adhered very rigidly to the rules of life that St. Francis enjoined. Some anecdotes related in a publication of that day are said to refer to this society; but from the little information I have collected,

there seems to be no strong foundation for this opinion. The woman who was their only female domestic is still living, and after many enquiries, I believe all their transactions may as well be buried in oblivion.' Respectability all this crew seemed to turn their backs upon, and if there was any man of moderate intelligence, from the founder to Bubb Doddington, it may have been Wilkes, of whom Green, in his History of England, has well said: 'When mobs were roaring themselves hoarse over "Wilkes and Liberty," Pitt denounced Wilkes as a worthless profligate.' They should have recruited their ranks from foreign countries. There was no Texas in those days, of which an ingenious American has given as a derivation of the name:—

When every other land rejects us
This is the only place that teks us.

Or the more refined and bitter sarcasm of Henry IV. on his death-bed, which he gave as advice to his son, might serve as a clue:

To the English court assemble now
From every region, apes of idleness:
Now neighbour confines, purge you of your scum;
Have you a ruffian that will swear? drink? dance?
Revel the night? rob? murder? and commit
The oldest sins the newest kind of ways? &c.

No, the members of what they were pleased to term themselves, the 'Hell-fire Club,' were distinguished more for weakness than anything else, and it is not recorded that they were in any instance defendants in a magistrate's court. They were very far indeed from heroes. Wilkes, who caused much trouble in his life (though right was on his side in his struggle with Parliament), had perhaps as much wit as any of the crew, and was not a credit to Parliament or to the age he lived in.

The associations of West Wycombe, however, are not very encouraging. Lord Wharton, it is true, lived there, and he had some fair claims upon the gratitude of his posterity. It is alleged by Bishop Percy, that he was the author of 'Lilliburlero,' a song that had great success in its day and generation, and is said to have had a greater power than even the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes in theirs; and it was indeed a very bold step, with the example of Montrose before them, and the infamous cruelties of Judge Jeffreys fresh in the recollections of every one, to plan another attempt to free the kingdom from the misrule of the Stuarts, for James II. was still in power, and his wicked judge was in the height of his favour at court. Lord Wharton was a guiding spirit in the Revolution of 1688; and at Hurley

Place, in the near neighbourhood, are the vaults where the documents were signed, inviting William III. to come to England. This part of England, indeed, is not very full of pleasing recollections for the Stuarts. At Maidenhead, in the Greyhound Inn, Charles I. took leave of his family.

Wharton the elder was a worthy man, but his son's name is a byword. He was the father of the Duke of Wharton. There are three Whartons who have been conspicuous characters in history. The first and second were respectable men, but the third, who was raised to the rank of a Duke, was such as we have seen. In the reign of Charles I., Philip Lord Wharton married Jane, the heiress to the vast estates of the Goodwins and Spencers, and he resided at Winchenden till the death of his wife, when he went to another seat of the family at Woburn. Lord Wharton was a supporter of the people in their struggle against the exactions of the Stuarts, and was indeed one of the Commissioners sent by Parliament to Scotland, but at the Restoration he was permitted to retire upon his estate and live as a country gentleman. At Woburn William III. visited him, for the misrule of James brought him again into activity, and his excellent son composed the first draft of the invitation to the Prince of Orange. In the year 1695 he died, and left his great possessions to his son Thomas; he seems also to have embraced the cause of freedom, and was made privy councillor by William. He greatly assisted Lord Somers in establishing the Union between England and Scotland which was finally assented to in 1707. The vividness with which these subjects bring before us momentous events in history is among the charms of English travel, and it is impossible to refrain from quoting the words which Somers puts into the mouth of Queen Anne in giving her assent to the Act:—‘I desire and expect from my subjects of both nations that from henceforth they act with all possible respect and kindness to one another, that it may appear to all the world they have hearts disposed to become one people;’ and as Dr. Green truly says, ‘time has more than answered these hopes. To Scotland the Union opened up new avenues of wealth, which the energy of the people turned to wonderful account. The farms of Lothian have become models of agricultural skill. A fishing village on the Clyde has grown into Glasgow.’ The third of the Whartons was the unworthy representative of these men. His talents were great, and he was rewarded with a seat in the House of Peers, though a minor. His energetic support of the Ministry procured him a dukedom, but his evil life, his vanity, and his utter lack of principle, have been well described by Pope:—

Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our days,
Whose ruling passion was the lust of praise,
Born with whate'er could win it from the wise,
Women and fools must like him or he dies.
Tho' wondering senates hung on all he spoke,
The club must hail him master of the joke.
Shall parts so various aim at nothing new ;
He'll shine a Tully and a Wilmot too.

. . . with each gift of nature and of art,
And wanting nothing but an honest heart ;

A fool, with more of wit than half mankind,
Too rash for thought, for action too refined,
A tyrant to the wife his heart approves,
A rebel to the very king he loves.

Earl Wharton, the father of the last mentioned, is said to have spent 100,000*l.* over Woburn, in altering the house and grounds, and the gardens were among the most celebrated in England ; they occupied the side of the hill, which was afterwards converted into pasture. This great building was taken down in 1750, and the materials were sold for 800*l.* !

In the wilderness near the house, Langley says that, during the great Rebellion, Lord Wharton concealed 60,000*l.* in a plantation called West Wood, and he could not remember where he had put it, the only other persons privy to the transaction being either dead or in exile ; but two acres were cleared, and the whole of the treasure found. 50*l.* was discovered in gold angels last century, but we have no means of knowing the truth of the other story ; still, we have the ingenuous confession of Mr. Pepys in his own experiences ; and as for burying large sums, there is, indeed, a tradition, which appears in some Chester local histories, of a large sum of money having been abstracted from the cellars of the house where these lines are written, and buried in a garden near the city walls in George II's. time. It did not approach in magnitude that which legend says lay concealed at Woburn—indeed it was not more than a quarter the amount ; but it was used by the enterprising captors for their own purposes, and even partially invested. The singular part of the story is that, from what I have heard recently, it does not seem to be legendary.

The part of England we have been considering, and the country that lies in the immediate vicinity, is among the most charming in the whole kingdom, for we are near Cliveden, Marlow, and Medmenham.

ALFRED RIMMER.

(To be continued.)

The Plague-Smitten Ship.

I.

THE law of the land does not hold one who is privy to a crime so guilty as its perpetrator, but that in man by which he is a law unto himself makes him feel that if he stands assenting by while an evil deed is being done he is guilty of doing it.

Thus the whole town of Twyscar on the north-east coast—every one of its responsible citizens—was many years ago guilty of a dastardly crime, which for shame it would fain have buried in oblivion, and which has been until now locked away in the memory of old inhabitants. The 5th of March is the black day in the Twyscar calendar. Its blackness was induced as follows.

Twyscar is a picturesque little seaport built in the upper horn of a crescent-shaped bay. But it has also been a watering-place since the days of Cromwell; and so it has for very many years divided its attention and industry between its furnished lodgings and its harbour and humble fishing-boats and 'coal-tubs.' That March, however, its interest in 'Lodgings to let' was greater than it had ever been before or has ever been since. Twyscar was at the turning-point of its success. In the preceding year, which was the great year of cholera, it had won a unique reputation: it had been the only town in that country or coast which the plague had declined to visit, and its shrewd citizens had thrown open their doors to the terrified well-to-do people who fled from their homes in the crowded, noisome towns of the West Riding, had made out heavy bills for their guests, and gratefully acknowledged an overruling Providence. But a reputation that goes up like a rocket is very likely to come down like its stick; and the Twyscarians, feeling (though they would never say so) that it was neither their superior physical nor their superior moral position which had kept the cholera away, but mere luck, fidgeted and scrubbed, abstained from herrings and jealously excluded poor strangers, in order to keep the cholera out and their reputation up. It was with a fine perception of the unconfessed mood of the community in general, and the Harbour Commissioners in particular, that old Cripplegarth, the harbour-master, ventured to pick a quarrel with two Grimsby fishing-smacks that approached the harbour on the afternoon of the 4th, and made them put to sea again, though a gale was threatening, and all because he knew the mild spring weather had witnessed a fresh outbreak of cholera along the low banks of the Humber. So on

the evening of the 4th of March, old Cripplegarth and his fellow-citizens, with that humble sense of satisfaction which all virtuous souls must feel who hope to profit by the misfortunes of their neighbours, put on their night-caps and lay down to dream of another good cholera season, and of house and purse filled by entertaining people who could afford to pay for the luxury of sojourning in an uninfected town.

In the night the whole town was waked by a racket and a roaring in the chimneys, by the rattling of windows and the trembling of floors and bedsteads. A north-easter was raging. While those 'down street,' who had no care of furnished lodgings to trouble them, lay thinking of husbands and sons at sea, those 'up street' turned in bed and listened in fear for the wreck of chimneys and roofs, and some even arose to assure themselves whether the wet had reached their newly-whitened ceilings, or the soot been driven down upon their freshly-beaten carpets and new window-curtains.

The situation in the early morning, when Twyscar looked forth from the bosom and shoulder of the gruff old headland to which it nestled and clung upon the raging and distracted sea, was well represented in the speech and manner of Cripplegarth. He passed up and down in the lee of his house on the lighthouse pier (there was no roll in his gait; he had never been to sea as a sailor), smoked his pipe, and occasionally paused to drop a remark into the talk of the old salts leaning about the posts or against the wall. The eyes of the old men wandered round the bay, from the white waves flung high over the wall of the promenade and gardens, to the raging surf tearing itself to pieces on the mussel-beds, dashing itself exhausted against the grim rocks and floating up in foam into their crevices, and then on to the 'lambs' (as the folk called the white breakers), leaping and racing round the Nab in the extreme south; the eyes of the harbour-master, only now and then observing the scene around, were for the most part turned inward.

'It bain't half done,' said an old fellow, after eyeing the skurrying rack of clouds and the gleam of sunshine flashing out in the south.

'It wur a stiff night,' said Cripplegarth, pausing in his walk and laying a solid emphasis on the words, which implied that he conceived the night could scarcely have been 'stiffer.'

'It wur nou't, Maister Cripplegarth,' said the old fellow, spitting pettishly to some distance—'nou't to that gale in February wur fifteen year; ye mind, Jim' (turning to a neighbour), 'there wur ten sail ashore atween the fish-pier there and the mussel-beds

and the Dutch galliot were driv clean-slap into t' block-yard. Last night wur nou't, Maister Cripplegarth.'

'Weel, Sam,' said Cripplegarth, 'we dean't want it wuss or so bad; t' rain got under tiles and has made a mess o' t' new-papared walls, and spoiled window-curtains in my son's best room.'

'Ah!' came in a murmur of respectful commiseration from all the old fellows, who now turned their eyes on the harbour-master.

'New uns, I suppose,' said Sam, 'for company. A good deal o' company in town already; a good thing for town; gi'es plenty o' employment; a good price for fish an' all; and fond o' sailin' out in cobles, too, company is.'

'Ay, Sam,' said the harbour-master, planting himself right in front of the old man to deliver his opinion with greater force, 'a splendid thing for the town, my man—if the town can keep up its name—if the town can keep its name. Mark my words, it will be the makin' o' the town if we can keep it up—keep, ye understand, the black cholera oot. If we can't—the Lord help ye!' And he turned away.

The old men were much impressed, and furtively watched the harbour-master tramping up and down while they considered his words.

'Two yawls coming round from north'ard,' cried a man from a raised stand from which the open sea could be seen over the break-water pier.

Cripplegarth was at once alert. 'Are they oor own, Jack?'

Jack looked through his glass; 'Yees, number 39; and' (after a pause) '64.'

'If they warn't,' said the harbour-master, 'I tell you, boys, I'd have signalled them off.' The men were silent and merely looked at him in their dull way. But he understood them. He added, again stopping in his walk, 'Only our own boats know the trick of making the harbour, and we don't want to see strangers run 'em-selves ashore, do we?'

The master winked; a deep gust of laughter came from the men as they nodded their heads and winked one at another, and said with clumsy playfulness of tone, 'Oh, no, we don't like to see 'em ashore, we don't.' The fact is, it did not in the least pain them to have a ship ashore, worth the trouble of being plundered (and poor indeed would have been the craft they would not have considered worth that trouble; they got firewood, if nothing else); it did not pain them; why, they thought, should it, if the lives on board were saved?

'Don't ye go for to misunderstand me,' said the master, after looking round upon them. 'I mean it. If ou't come ashore this

bout—weel, we may get summut, and summut mair than we bargain for. Ye marn't niver forget, boys, there's that damned cholera about iverywhere, an' I'm determined I'll warn off every blessed strange craft that looks at t' harbour, tide or no tide; an' in the night I'll burn 'em off.' He glanced up at the swinging brazier, which was filled with coal and sticks ready for lighting.

'I allus call this here bay,' said Sam, 'a trap—a crab-trap in a nor'easter; once in, there's no gittin' out again. Here comes your nor'easter sweepin' your sea in, like an au'd wife sweepin' puddle wi' a broom; it sweeps in past far-pier and there, across to t' sands and cliffs; an' what does it do round here? it makes such a swirling divil of an undertow oot o' t' harbour that I've seen ships ta'en from strong moorin's here, and carried clean away on to t' sands ower there. Only our own boats and smacks know how to shoot into t' harbour, an' wi' them in a bad wind it's a risk.'

'Thoo knows the harbour, Sam,' said Cripplegarth.

'I ou't to, Maister Cripplegarth; I sailed into 't for four-and-twenty year in a' sorts o' weather, an' my ain father was harbour-master in his day.'

The yawls sighted by Jack now shot close round the end of the breakwater pier, at the same instant dropping their sails, according to approved custom, to glide alongside the lighthouse pier into the harbour, with the 'way' upon them. But the under-current spoken of by Sam was even then so strong as to nullify the effect of the 'way' they had, and to threaten to carry them upon the beach. But a dozen deft and ready hands knew the danger; ropes were at once thrown, and the yawls were drawn in; a few seconds' delay, a less hearty cast of the line, and the yawls would have driven on to the sands or farther away against the cliffs, for there would have been neither time nor room to put them on another tack.

By noon the tide had turned, and the gale began to renew itself, as predicted by old Sam. Cloud and sea got mixed together and the rain flew almost horizontally, stinging the skin with its needle-points. Those on the pier were not sure whether the wet that stung and reddened the face was rain or spray: it was salt to the taste, and the surf was flying into the air many feet above the breakwater; it was passing round as a grim but vastly entertaining joke, how a man in the blockhouse overlooking the angle where the breakwater left the cliff had been struck in the eye with a jelly-fish thrown up by the surf. Some of the richer men of the town, who owned many of the fishing-vessels, now came upon the pier and fidgeted anxiously about Cripplegarth.

'Only two yawls come in yet, you say?' These were the words of the town-banker and chairman of the Harbour Commission.

'That's all, sir,' said Cripplegarth.

'Have you the tug ready in case any others should appear and want help?'

'All the men aboard, sir, and steam up. But I hope the other boats and smacks 'll keep to sea; it's better than the risk of a run for a harbour like this with its mouth to the south. And, besides, sir,' added he in a different and a dogged tone, 'we can't tell, as dark comes on, if it's one o' our own or a stranger we're helping.'

They exchanged only side-glances, but they perfectly understood each other.

'Perhaps,' said the banker, 'they'd best try to ride it out,' and turned away.

There came another lull in the storm about three o'clock in the afternoon. The clouds lifted, and a rift of light appeared in them; but the rift was to leeward.

'A ship to nor'ard—a schooner,' cried an old man from the look-out stand. 'Flying distress-signal,' said he after a pause.

There were two or three schooners belonging to the port; it might be one of them; more probably it was not. Cripplegarth tramped up and down and resolutely closed his lips.

'She sails weel—lifts hersel' weel oot o' t' water. What can be wrong?'

'Her top-sails gone,' said another.

'That's nou't to fly signals aboot.'

Cripplegarth watched her as she bore down. Seeing how wide she kept of the pier-end, 'She's a stranger, damn her!' he exclaimed. But he saw she had only to be let alone and she would drive away on to the mussel-beds: she could not tack enough into the wind to make the harbour:—he saw this at once, and a gleam of satisfaction was in his eye. The men around saw it, too, and looked with something like dread at the harbour-master: would he send out the tug or no? People on the cliff and along the shore saw it, and wondered that nothing was being done to save the ship.

She was still driving when down came her fore-sail and main-sail, and in a moment she ceased to drift!

'Damn her!' cried Cripplegarth. 'She's anchored!'

In a minute he was on board a pilot-boat, and in a few minutes more the boat was bouncing within a few yards of the schooner.

'Ship ahoy!' cried Cripplegarth.

'*Mary Ann* of Bideford,' replied a big, well-bearded man over the ship's side (his beard and oil-skins hid his face), 'in timber from the Baltic.'

'You can't come in, skipper,' said the harbour-master; 'it is almost low water, and ours is a horribly bad harbour to make wi' a wind and sea like this; better run to the south'ard; you'll get round the Nab while the lull lasts, and Flixenby's a safe harbour.'

'All right; you may stow your advice, master; it's a doctor I want. This is Twyscar, isn't it?'

'A doctor!'

'Ay; ye've a many doctors in Twyscar, I'll be bound. Get us a doctor, like a good man; my wife and two o' the hands are down wi' something: two died the day before yesterday of it. There's only myself and a lad to handle the ship. I'll stay here till your bar's deep enough, and then you can send me out your tug; I'll pay ye well for the job.'

'Tell me this:—what's the matter wi' your wife and them?'

'I don't know.'

'Is it—is it the cholera?'

'God forbid! But maybe it is.'

The boat fell away, and was rowed back to the pier. The rowers wondered at Cripplegarth's occupied air, and wondered still more when, again turning his eyes to the schooner, he exclaimed, 'By God, she shan't come in!'

II.

CRIPPLEGARTH had no thought of keeping it secret that he believed the cholera was at their doors at last; he even published it abroad with pithy oaths and imprecations. The news had soon leavened the whole town that the schooner straining at her anchor in the bay—the *Mary Ann* of Bideford—had cholera aboard. Townsfolk and visitors, filled with resentment and fear, gathered on the sands and the cliff or ventured round upon the pier and gazed now at the pitching and straining ship and then in each other's face. A criminal desire lurked in the hearts of all:—If the gale would only re-awake, the cable would part or the anchor would drag, and the pestilent schooner would drive to destruction far off upon the rocks, and they would never again see more of her and her occupants but the battered hull!

Have you ever seen a crowd in a panic of crush or fire?—how the contact and the danger make it as but one sentient creature, and that a terror-stricken beast? Then have you some notion of how entirely cruel the dread of the awful and mysterious Black Cholera made this Twyscar throng. The human beings who can think and feel and have courage as individuals in an excited crowd are rare.

Young Doctor Harland, whom Cripplegarth came upon at the pier-head, was one of these. The harbour-master was loudly declaring that he supposed he would have to send all round the town for a doctor.

'You needn't trouble,' said Harland, coming forward, 'to send up the town: Dr. Cross and Mr. Gold are sure to be out. I'll go on board if you'll take me.'

'Well, sir, thoo can if thoo likes. But I suppose thoo knows it's cholera—two men and skipper's wife (what does t' wife want sailin' aboot to get into mischief?)—an' it's no use doin' ou't in cholera.'

Harland looked at him with his throat full of hasty words, but he only uttered these:—'Will you get me rowed on board at once?'

'You're the doctor, I suppose?' said the big, bearded, oil-skinned skipper, as Harland clambered up the ship's side and clutched the bulwark to steady himself. 'Thank you kindly, sir, for coming; ' and he fervently wrung the young man's hand. 'This way, sir, if you can; ' and he led to the fore-castle.

'I thought it was your wife, skipper?'

'Oh, yes, sir. But the men were took first; so, if you please, sir—— And Susan herself wants you to go to the men first.'

The men tossed in their close dark bunks, the one above the other, sighing and moaning as if they had a grievous weight on their breasts. Harland took the lamp in one hand, and clinging with the other to the edge of the pitching and sloping beds, looked in their faces, noted their black-furred lips, tongue, and teeth, and, while the skipper held the light, performed various other acts of diagnosis. He asked questions, which the men tried to answer, but their speech was like that of dumb persons.

The skipper anxiously eyed the doctor.

'This is not cholera,' said the young man.

'Not! Thank God!'

The doctor smiled a thin, faint smile. 'I suppose you think cholera the worst that could happen!'

'Sure-ly!' The doctor turned away.

In the cabin he found the wife; such a noble, queenly-looking woman as only Devonshire can show frequently among its poor or middling people. Her symptoms were the same as those of the men, but not quite so far advanced. How jealously the skipper eyed every movement and touch of the doctor's hand! Did he not guess that even a doctor's touch, especially a young doctor's, on the skin of a beautiful woman is tenderer and more sensitive far than on that of common man or woman-kind?

The doctor drew aside a little. 'They're very thirsty—aren't they?'

'Awful. But I've nought but water to give 'em.'

'That's all the better.'

The big skipper looked from side to side, and then impulsively seized the doctor's hand.

'You're a young man, but I make no doubt you're clever, sir. Save her—my Susan, an' I'll gi'e ye ought you like! I see by your look it's ser'ous! But ship's mine, cargo's mine, and I ha' 300*l.* in bank at Bideford!'

The young man stopped him, laying his hand on his arm, and said, 'Don't. I'll do my best. First we must get her—her and the men—ashore. Why didn't you enter the harbour at first? Did you anchor here in quarantine?'

'I ran for the harbour, but didn't make it, and the tug did not come out to take me in. Then the harbour-master rowed out and said it was near low water—I couldn't get in—and advised me to make for Flixenby.'

'Humph! It is near low-water time, but what with the wind and sea, it is now at least as full as half-tide; you can get in well enough.'

'Sure-ly! You say so!'

The doctor stroked his eyebrow; he saw plainly the harbour-master's meaning, but he was resolved to get his patients ashore in spite of him. The vessel gave a painful lurch and threw him against the skipper. He smiled and said, 'I don't seem to have sea-legs, but, as a matter of fact, not having much doctoring to do here, I have done a good deal of sailing. I can take a yawl or a smack into this harbour in a nor'easter, and that's what few can do except fishermen brought up in the place. But I don't know if I can take in a schooner. Of course a smack can tack more into the wind.'

'Ay, sure; but we can signal for the tug at wonst.'

'You may signal, but the tug won't come;' and then the doctor explained the situation of the town, and its selfish eagerness to sustain its reputation; its dread of the cholera, and its belief, derived from the harbour-master, that the schooner carried the plague; and his own conviction that, sooner than help her into harbour, they would see her drive away and become a wreck.

'By the great Elijah! Let us go on the rocks, and let us all be drowned or bruised to—! I can't believe it, sir! They're Englishmen!'

'I wish I could believe with you. But we must be quick; the gale is rising again.' (There was a sound in the rigging like the

rush of the wind through a fir-tree). 'You can signal for the tug and see.'

Before going on deck they returned to the sick wife's side. Her swollen, fevered mouth opened and attempted utterance.

'She wants a drink,' said Harland, looking about for a water-vessel.

'She'd like me to give it her, sir,' said the skipper, dipping a china cup into a can which swung from the roof, and pressing before the doctor. He gently raised his wife on his strong arm and gave her the drink. 'I wish,' said he, 'Susy, my dear, I had ought but water for ye.'

She clasped her fair round arm closer about his neck and stroked his cheek with her hand. He offered to kiss her with a big sob in his throat, but she pressed him away, shook her head, and smiled.

'The doctor,' said he, laying her down, 'will get ye something, my lass, when we get ashore.'

She did not seem to have perceived the doctor till now, when she looked at him earnestly, and, pointing to her husband, tried to speak. But the words were thick and unintelligible. The doctor looked at the skipper.

'She says I ha'n't had a sleep for four nights, and I must rest as soon as ever we are ashore. But, Lord love ye, I ail nought.'

The doctor, looking more attentively at his open manly face, noticed that the eyes were worn and red, and that the skin had that arid, cold look, beneath its natural ruddiness, which long want of sleep always gives.

'We must get in at once,' said he, turning to climb to the deck.

They ran out the signal for the tug, and while they waited, with the fierce bitter wind searching into every seam and opening in their garments, the skipper turned to the doctor:—'You're sartin sure, sir, it's not the cholera?—But what do she lose her speech for now? That ain't gone for altogether, sure-ly!'

'No. It always happens in this kind of fever, and she won't get it properly back again till some time after she is quite cured of the fever.'

'My God!—looking round at the lowering, darkening sky, and the leaping tempestuous waves—'if she shouldn't get better at all! I hadn't ought to have let her make the voyage, and her near her time and all!' He dashed the back of his hand across his eyes.

'Come, my friend, it's not so bad as that. Your want of sleep unmans you a bit—that's what it is. We must get ashore.'

But, looking thither, they saw that the tug still lay at her berth in the harbour. They observed, however, that a boat was rowing out. When it came alongside, the man at the bow oar stood up and said, 'To take you ashore, sir.'

'Me ashore?' said the doctor. 'We want the tug to take the schooner in.'

'Maister Cripplegarth bid me say it's low water, sir.'

Then the young man was angry. 'Tell Cripplegarth that, though he may fool this stranger with that, he can't fool me. I know in a sea and wind like this there's little tide; there's more than enough water on the bar to float a full brig. I know what Cripplegarth wants, but I'm determined to get my patients in in spite of him!'

'Ay, ay, sir.' The boat fell away and returned to the harbour.

The doctor turned to the skipper, who stood pulling his beard, wearily gazing out to sea and then glancing wistfully for signs of motion in the tug.

'Skipper,' said the young man, 'you needn't look for the tug.'

'It's going to be a wild night again,' said the skipper. 'You're sure there's water enough?'

'Quite enough, if you can once turn the pier. Does your schooner sit well to the sea when under sail, skipper?—and answer her rudder smart?' The skipper nodded over and over again, as if it were superfluous to ask. 'Then we'll do it! About the beating out for a good tack in you'll know better than I do—'

'Ay, ay!'

'—and about what sails you will set.'

'Jib and mainsail. I can't manage more'n two wi' only the boy there'—pointing to a leggy youth of eighteen or so.

'That'll do. Your bit of square rig will not interfere with you, then. Well, all the direction I have to give you is—shave the end of the breakwater pier as close as ever you can; you get a good capful of wind between it and the lighthouse pier; then down at once with every sail, and round you go, and shoot alongside the lighthouse there, if not past it.'

The skipper eyed the eager young man with an odd smile; he seemed to have forgotten he was a medical practitioner, and thought of him only as an amateur sailor. 'Well,' said he, 'we'll see if we can do it. Before we raise the anchor I must go down to Susy again. Would ye like to see her again, sir?' He now recollected he was addressing the doctor.

They found both the wife in the cabin and the two sailors in the forecabin more feverish.

'They do say,' said the skipper, 'in my part o' the country,

that the like o' that shows a sudden change o' weather. Pray God it bain't to be a devil o' a night again.'

The sailors' case seemed so serious that the doctor at once inquired for wet cloths for their heads, and declared his intention of staying below.

As he sat on the bottom step of the companion-way looking into the fusty gloom and hearing the sighing and moaning of the men, which mingled dismally with the dash of the waves against the bows, and the steady *clink-clink* of the windlass in working the vessel up to her anchor, reflection came upon him. How crammed with incident, feeling, and decision had been the few minutes since he had come on board! He had hurried into advice and action, without for an instant considering himself. He now saw very clearly how he had compromised not only his present safety, but his hopes of successful practice. Would the narrow, prejudiced Twyscarians ever forgive him? What were the skipper and his wife and men to him more than to the Twyscarians, that he of all men should have rushed into such peril on their account? Would they reward him for the ruin of his prospects? would they find him a living now that his chance of one in Twyscar was lost? They would doubtless thank him heartily if they recovered; if they did not recover, the big skipper would probably blame and hate him.

The bump of one of the sailors in his bunk and a louder moan than usual, roused him out of his bitter reverie. With the lightness and buoyancy of youth and health, he was again on his feet by the side of his patients, tenderly ministering to them. That a man's action is nobler than his philosophy, is happily as often true as the converse is.

He gave them water to drink, and wrung out afresh the cold wet cloths for their heads. Then a peculiar bound and lurch in the ship told him that they were under sail, and he ran up on deck. The two jibs were set and the mainsail; the skipper was at the wheel, and the headlong waves dashed and clambered at the bows and fell in harmless spray on the deck. He looked at the shore and the piers, lined with people, and he fancied what a weight of dread and responsibility must be shifting from their craven hearts, as they saw the schooner sailing away—to Flixenby, of course. He tried to imagine the exultation of Cripplegarth at the apparent success of his policy, and the sophistical ease he and all of them would try to find for their consciences in the fact that Twyscar had at least put a smart young doctor on board the ship.

'The mean, terrified curs!' he exclaimed to himself.

And yet, in view of his own mood of a few minutes since, he

relented a little and considered: 'If that wretch Cripplegarth even were once here, I dare say he'd be kind to these poor things.'

'Doctor, ahoy!'

The doctor went abaft to the skipper.

'You'll excuse my makin' so free, sir, but I'd take it particular kind if you'd give a look down at my poor Susy.'

'I was just coming, skipper.'

'You'll excuse me, sir; but we ha'n't been married a year yet; and the doctor observed there was a large drop swelling in the corner of each eye; but that might have been owing to the bitterness of the wind, which swept under the penthouse of his sou'wester and found out every hair of his beard.

The doctor when he returned on deck saw that the schooner was not in hopeful plight. She had made but little way out to sea, and with keeping her head up to the wind the waves burst over her deck; the forecastle hatchway had to be closed.

'There must be a queer set of current hereabout,' said the skipper.

'There is, but—' The young man looked anxious and puzzled. Then he took out his watch. 'That's it!' he exclaimed. 'The tide has turned, and doubled the strength of the current. If we can only get well out, it will carry us in like a mill-stream.'

'We must see if we can hoist the foresail,' said the skipper. 'Can you hold the wheel, sir, till she's up? So!'

At length the schooner was got far enough out to sea, the foresail was again furled, and, while the skipper drew the wheel well up, the lad stood ready to swing the mainsail round. This was not accomplished a moment too soon; for the storm, like a monstrous winged thing, could be seen coming flying over the glooming, whitening waters. The ship trembled like a living creature in turning, as if she felt the approach of her dreadful enemy. Then she leaned over and plunged and dashed, through streaming green water and curling and hissing white, straight for the pier-head, against and over which the sea was madly flinging itself.

What were the astonishment and dismay of the spectators on the beach and the pier when the ship which was bearing away the terrible plague from their doors and the dread from their hearts was seen swiftly returning! Some laughed in a vacant fashion, others exclaimed 'Good God!' and turned as if to find some one to blame.

'Ah, look ye! It's sight o' storm has sent her back!' cried some.

Cripplegarth guessed more accurately. 'I'se wager,' he muttered, 'it's that damned young doctor's trick. He's mad after

tryin' his new-fangled cures. But, by Gum! he shanna bring 'em here. Ah, lordy, lordy!' he cried, 'she'll go yet! She wunna stand another like that! She'll drive! She'll drive!'

The squall had overtaken and flown upon the schooner with its blinding envelopment of rain and wind. She staggered and wallowed on her beam-ends in the trough of the sea, and as the storm swept over her and mingled its streaming darkness with the gathering shades of evening she was obscured for a moment or two from those on shore. Would she reappear? or, was she gone for ever, doctor and all? Presently she was descried plunging valiantly as before, straight at the pier-head; she had not been driven half a cable's length from her course. Cripplegarth silently, doggedly watched her approach.

'She'll do it!' was the reluctant and alarmed mutter that went round among the wagging heads and uneasy shoulders.

And she did it. She shot round the pier and dropped her mainsail in the true Twyscar fashion, and while Cripplegarth glared in discomfiture, she slid in towards the lighthouse, bringing her offensive human cargo under their very noses. Even then, however, her 'way' was exhausted, and the strong undertow might have carried her away, but that for very shame they could not refuse to throw her a rope. They were going to haul her in.

'Avast there!' cried the harbour-master; 'you can't go into harbour, skipper.'

'What's that for, Mr. Harbour-master? I must go in.'

'Keep a civil tongue, skipper. You must go where you're told, or go somewhere else: you must moor here.'

So the schooner was moored just off the lighthouse, outside the mouth of the harbour and in its out-draught. The young doctor jumped ashore in a fine passion.

'You'll repent this!' he said as he passed Cripplegarth and strode away.

III.

DARKNESS seemed to envelop sea and land, and the fury of the storm grew rabid. Spectators speedily vanished from the pier, and from the shore too, which was made untenable by the rushing surf, which would, when least expected, sweep swiftly from the sands up into the yards and against the houses, and by the stinging bitter rain, peculiar to such a storm, compounded of sea and cloud spray and fine sand, driving through the garments and almost through the skin. The calm light of the lighthouse was lit, beneath it streamed the lurid flare of the brazier, and beneath it again on the pavement paced the dark, stormy figure of the self-con-

stituted guardian of Twyscar health and reputation. As he tramped sturdily up and down, careless and scarcely conscious of the persistent buffetings of the storm, in his tough, dogged nature his half-baffled resolution was growing to heroic proportions. As harbour-master his will had always been unquestioned as law, and it must be admitted that until this crisis it had ruled fairly and honestly;—and now, that it should be set aside and frustrated was not to be borne. He had resolved and said (in his headstrong heat, he had now half-forgotten why) that that schooner should not enter his harbour; and there it was straining at its cables under his very nose—though, indeed, not quite in the harbour! That meddling young doctor would be back by-and-by with cabs or vehicles of some sort to carry away the ‘smitten’ people on board and spread the horrible infection throughout the town.

‘He shanna! By the Lord, he shanna!’ and the old man clenched his fists.

But how?—how? He must be somehow prevented at once, or he could not be prevented at all; and that would be gall and wormwood.

Up and down, up and down, with a keen revengeful eye on the deck of the schooner and the skipper who now paced it and now disappeared below. How the outward rush of the undercurrent made the vessel tug and ‘pace’ at her cables, which had become somewhat slack, and cracked and creaked with every recurring strain. If they would only snap, then—! All at once he remembered Sam’s reminiscence of ships wrenched from their moorings even in the harbour by the outdraught in a Nor’easter. He noted that the skipper was not on deck, and he went and examined both cables. That from the bows had the greater strain and passed through the gap of a large double block and pulley of the kind commonly affixed flat-wise to the edges of piers and quays; the other had less strain, and his heart leapt to observe it was loosely knotted about the mooring-post; one of the ties in the knot was already almost undone: he saw clearly now what he would do. But the skipper had returned on deck, and he must wait. He entered his snugery at the base of the lighthouse, and issued again with a hatchet in his hand. By-and-by the skipper went below again: this was Cripplegarth’s opportunity.

He rapidly arranged the fastenings of the looser cable so that it would drag itself free when full strain were once put upon it. Then he went to the block and pulley, where the other was yawing to and fro and fraying itself, and he set the sharp edge of the axe for it to rub on. This done he resumed his sturdy, measured tramp on the stones.

All unconscious of the fate slowly creeping upon him and his helpless wife and crew, the skipper wearily paced the deck and wondered what delayed the doctor coming to their rescue. Under the load of fear and exhaustion which oppressed him, he swore to himself that, once his dear Susy were well enough and she and the timber landed in Bideford, never would he set foot on ship again. But why did not the doctor come? Was it only sleeplessness or was it also presentiment that made his heart ache with dread, as he listened to the roar and hiss of the storm from which the pier sheltered him, as he felt his ship painfully groaning and straining on her moorings, and as he watched the wild flare of the brazier above, and the grim sinister figure of that hard old man, who seemed in his lonely persistent pacing like a wild beast waiting to spring on his prey?

Why did not the doctor come?—He went below again and looked at his bonny wife, now sleeping with soothing wet cloths about her head. He then went forward to see the two men: the lad whom he had left by them was asleep, and they were tossing and moaning and mumbling.

‘Well, well, poor lad! he’s as tired as a log.’

He gave the men drink and refreshed them with cool cloths, and then returned on deck. He, poor fellow! could not rest. Oh, why did not the doctor——? He caught the rumble of wheels—cab-wheels—upon the pier: the doctor was coming at last.

But the ear of that sinister watchful man above had also caught the sound of wheels. In an instant he was at the edge of the pier and bending over, and before the skipper could conceive what he was about, the schooner was drifting away, and the cables splashed into the sea.

‘You infernal villain!’ he yelled, and rushed to the wheel.

The next quarter of an hour was to the skipper a desperate, almost delirious hand-to-hand fight with the rush and whirl and pitiless pelting of the storm. He reached the forecastle somehow and roused the boy, by dint of shouting and dragging, to a sense of the situation; he was handling the wheel while the boy let out the jib; he was borne on by mighty hissing seas he knew not whither, except that it was farther and farther from the pier whose light grew yellower and smaller. He knew now that his schooner was to become a wreck; it was of no use trying to run out to sea; he could only strive to run her ashore on the beach. But a vast wave swept on the ship broadside, burst over her, and knocked him down. He clung to the wheel, but in a moment he let it go: it was of no use: either the rudder or rudder-chain was broken. The ship now lay and was swept away

at the cruel mercy of the waves—swept with wind and current away to south'ard against the dark cliffs, whose hollow roar, as they kept the breakers at bay, stunned the ears and made the blood run cold.

That the dear helpless Susy must be flung to be torn between these Titanic combatants!—‘Good Lord, deliver us, and forgive that inhuman old man!’

It scarcely mattered that there was no boat left to launch, for it could not have lived a moment in such a sea. What, then, was to be done? He got some tow, lit it, and made the lad swing it to show a flare. But presently this was put out and the lad almost swept overboard by a heavy sea. He recollected his double-barreled rifle in the cabin; he brought it on deck, and fired it off. Surely now his distress was known, and kind souls would rush to his rescue; for kind souls there must be in Twyscar: it was an English town, and had seafaring men of its own. Yet, though lights burned steadily and brightly in the houses on the cliffs, he saw no lights appear along the shore. Were he and his quite, quite forsaken? . . . It seemed to him that he had been driving thus for hours through the storm. His body was growing numb and his mind stupid; the wind buffeted him, the waves burst upon the deck and drenched him, but he was no longer conscious of them. His one thought, growing ever more wild and distracting, was only ‘Susy! Susy!’

But in reality it could not have been more than half-an-hour from the moment he knew he had left the pier before he felt the ship strike on the sunken rocks and woke anew to the necessity for instant action.

The deck-load!—that was his only hope! They might get ashore on it! He descended to the cabin. To his dismay, he saw that the water had already entered, and that Susy lay calmly asleep with the few bedclothes she had endured upon her all wet. In sudden despair at the thought that she would probably never open her eyes upon him again, he stood paralysed. Then he bent down and passionately kissed her, calling ‘Susy! Susy! my dear, dear wife!’ She turned and murmured, and as if with a sudden inspiration (he remembered hearing among the old folk at home that sea-wet, if well wrapt in thick dry things, would not give cold), he wrapped her in the feather-bed on which she lay and which the water had not yet touched, then he swathed her tightly in all the blankets he could find, took off his oil-skin and put it about her, and then above all wrapped a stout tarpauling which completely encased her. He carried her thus on deck, and lashed her to the deck-load. Then he struggled to the fore-castle, wrapped the sailors

in what things he could find, and carried them one by one and lashed them also to the timber. He undid the fastenings which bound this improvised raft to the deck, and shouting to the lad, 'Hold on for your life!' he waited for the next big wave to break over the ship and carry the raft away. It came, and they were swept into the seething, hissing cauldron of waters. . . . Then he knew no more,—but that he clutched and clung with tearing nails and peeling fingers, that he was blinded and choked, beaten and bruised—till he came to himself on a ledge in the cliff, and let the desolate thought sweep over him, 'I am alone! Susy is gone!' But presently his heart bounded to see higher up the ledge the ruins of the raft, and to find close to his hand the line which connected him with the tarpaulin which lay upon it. Susy was near to him! But was she alive? He crept to her: her eyes were closed, and her face was cold! It could not be she was dead! She must not die!—She might only have swooned. He unbound her and took her in all her wrappings to carry her away. But his heart fell again: how could he with his burden escape from that cleft in the cliff up its rugged side? He must wait a little till he had recovered some strength.

He crouched as far back as he could with his wife in his arms. The cruel wolfish waves unweariedly leapt up at him, and with cold, strenuous fingers tried to tear him and his precious burden down. In their disappointed fury they hissed, and roared, and spat at him. The wind smote him and tried to push or snatch him from his place, and, as if to dizzy him, whirled great sponges of foam about his head and away up into the cliff. But he clung to the rock.

Then he felt strong enough to attempt to climb out of his perilous perch.

That evening of the fifth of March the Managing Committee of the Cliff Gardens and Promenade held their annual dinner in the banqueting-room of the Hall by the Sea. The sea climbing up their massive wall derisively flung spray and foam and shreds of seaweed at their lighted windows, but they caused the shutters to be closed to keep all thought of the sea out, and they rubbed their hands and sat down to eat and drink and to be as merry as became magistrates of the town and fathers of families. Now, it happened in Twyscar at that time, as it happens always and everywhere, that one corporate capacity attracted another; if a man was a magistrate, he was sure also to be on the 'Cliff Committee;' and if he was on the 'Cliff Committee,' he was certain to be on the 'Harbour Commission.' So all the men who cheerfully

leant over their soup knew of the odd fate of the plague-smitten ship, and of the providential deliverance of the town from the risk of the plague. Still, they were not free from care; an irksome sense of not having acted either in person or by proxy quite as became honest men and merchants hung heavy about their spirits—till the wine had circulated several times. Then tongues wagged more freely; but it was noticeable that no one even yet talked of what each was thinking about.

At length the chairman (the middle-aged banker whom we saw on the pier in the afternoon) rose to propose a certain toast.—('Hear, hear.')

'Gentlemen, I rise to propose the toast of the evening—prosperity to Twyscar and to the Cliff Gardens. Never before, I think I may venture to say, has this committee met under such favourable auspices. The town, I believe, has entered upon an era of unexampled prosperity. The Gardens and the Hall by the Sea have entered upon an era of unexampled prosperity, which, by the blessing of Providence——'

There he stuck dumb, with all eyes fastened on him. He clutched the back of his chair, and the pallor of his face and the dumb movement of his lips were a study for Macbeth when the ghost of Banquo appears at the feast. The reason stood in the door—a tall, wild-looking man with yellow, dishevelled beard and hair; coat and shirt hung in tatters about his strong arms, in which he bore a great tarpaulin package.

'Feastin', gentlemen!' he said in a natural tone enough, laying down his burden on the floor and kneeling over it, regardless of their presence. Then he stood up and advanced to the table with uplifted hand and delirious look (they now observed his feet were bare and bleeding). 'If she's dead!—may God bring judgment upon your cursed town!'—Then with a great sob he put his hands to his face and entreated, 'For mercy's sake, help me! Is there a doctor among ye?'

There was not. And, understanding that the strange bundle might be alive and breathing out pestilence and death (for one and all now guessed who the man was), they all shrank from its neighbourhood.

'He's—he's mad!' gasped the chairman.

'Let's send 'em into the kitchen,' said one more pitiful or less terror-stricken than the rest.

They heard a sudden rush of feet in the hall; a figure burst in at the door.

'Gentlemen——' and there he stopped staring at the skipper: it was Dr. Harland.

A rapid glance round, and he comprehended the situation. He took up the insensible woman in his arms, and was going out, when he turned again and said,

‘Twyscar shall suffer for this. I’ll put it in all the newspapers in the country. A parcel of cowardly fools! There was no cholera on board the ship that your wretched creature Cripple-garth cut from her moorings. Oh, you need not stare and start and frown at me!—it’s a fact which I can prove. If you have any remorse for the conduct of your town, you can go out and see if there are any others you can save; she’s on the mussel-beds.—Hi, my poor friend!’

The skipper had slipped from the chair in which he had sat down. In silent shame, they gathered round to revive him (were they not assured by a doctor that there was no cholera?) Others came about the doctor and his charge, whom he had carried to the fire, while others still hurried out to find the wreck.

‘You’d better leave this to me,’ said the doctor. ‘It’s not cholera, but it’s contagious.’

He was puzzled and astonished to find, on undoing the many wraps about the woman, that her skin was quite warm and soft and healthy. She did not need recovering from a swoon: he held *sal volatile* to her nostrils, and she opened her eyes as naturally as from a deep refreshing sleep. In lieu of beef-tea he gave her some warm clear soup.

In half an hour the skipper and his wife looked calmly in each other’s eyes and grasped with fervent, thankful love each other’s hands: the fever was gone.

In a week Susan was walking round Dr. Harland’s garden on her husband’s arm; and in a fortnight she gratefully and with a sisterly tenderness kissed the doctor after he had promised to visit Bidford, and was helped into the railway carriage on the beaming skipper’s strong arm.

That rapid recovery from typhoid fever was the talk of the town and the study of the doctor. It resulted in Dr. Harland’s famous ‘Fever Treatment,’ for which, amongst other things, Twyscar is now famed; for the doctor at once became a great man in the town, and was specially sought after to take charge of the health and the secrets of its magistrates.

Those who would like to explore the scene of this strange story will hardly recognise it; for Twyscar is now rich and increased with goods; it is grown beyond all belief, and is now often called by a royal name. Whether its marvellous prosperity has come because or in spite of its early crime, I leave casuists to determine.

Misfortunes in Metaphor.

METAPHOR is perhaps at once the most seductive and the most misleading form of speech. To the average orator it has the same attraction that edged tools have for children, and its use is as frequently followed by lamentable results. It is the earliest language of mankind, and it is one which the average modern man least successfully manages. When, at the earliest epoch of our development, metaphor was the ordinary form of speech, this maladroitness was not observable. In the Bible, for example, where metaphor is constantly employed, it invariably adorns speech, and often lifts it to the loftiest heights possible for prose. It is a lost art and not a new accomplishment we grapple with in these degenerate days when we venture on metaphor.

The class of people who most frequently use it claim kinship to past masters in the art, inasmuch as they are lacking in what we call education. The negro, and above all the negro preacher, wallows in metaphor, invariably more or less mixed. It was one of these who, confessing his faults before his congregation, cried aloud: 'Brethren, the muddy pool of politics was the rock on which I split.' It was another who fervently exclaimed: 'We thank Thee for this spark of grace; water it, good Lord.' Another prayed for 'grace that we might gird up the loins of our minds, so that we shall receive the latter rain.' Mixed metaphors grow luxuriantly on the fertile soil of the United States. Only the other day I read an article from the eloquent pen of Colonel John Forney, in which, speaking eulogistically of the mother of De Quincy Adams, he said, 'She was a public woman all her life. Hence the remarkably mixed character of her posterity.' This unhappy phrase is rather a muddling of expression than a mixing of metaphor.

Ireland has so long been looked upon as the home of mixed metaphor, that a good deal of the fun has been rubbed out by the suspicion that specimens are made to order. Of this class is doubtless the peroration attributed to an Irish barrister. 'Gentlemen of the Jury,' he is reported to have said, 'it will be for you to say whether this defendant should be allowed to come into Court with unblushing footstep, with the cloak of hypocrisy in his mouth, and draw three bullocks out of my client's pocket with impunity.' In this connection I will quote a single illustration, which has at least the advantage of being authentic. Early

in last year, before the General Election, Mr. Shaw, Member for the County Cork, and at that time Leader of the Home Rule Party, was addressing a meeting held one Sunday at Cork, with the object of discussing the land question. Mr. Shaw is a sober-minded man, who, on ordinary occasions, finds plain speech serve his purpose. At this time, however, the spirit of metaphor came upon him, and this is what it made him say: 'They tell us that we violate the Sabbath by being here to-day. Yet, if the ass or the ox fall into the pit, we can take him out on the Sabbath. Our brother is in the pit to-day—the farmer and the landlord are both in it—and we are come here to try if we can lift them out.' This similitude of the Irish landlord to an animal predestined to slaughter was bold but timely. The other half of the analogy seemed calculated to get Mr. Shaw into trouble with his constituency.

In Germany, metaphors are evolved from the inner conscience with great success. There are one or two famous in the literary history of the country. Everyone has heard of the speech of Justice-Minister Hye, who, addressing the Vienna students in the troublous time of 1848, declared, 'the chariot of the Revolution is rolling along, and gnashing its teeth as it rolls.' On the other side, a democrat came very near to this success by announcing that 'we will burn all our ships and, with every sail unfurled, steer boldly out into the ocean of freedom.' Less known is the address by the mayor of a Rhineland corporation, spoken to the Emperor William shortly after he was crowned at Versailles. 'No Austria, no Prussia!' said the inspired mayor; 'one only Germany! Such were the words the mouth of your Imperial Majesty has always had in its eye.' Essentially German is a sentence from a learned criticism on a book of lyrics which carries the signature of Professor Johannes Sheer. 'Out of the dark regions of philosophical problems,' says the Professor, 'the poet suddenly lets swarms of songs dive up carrying far-flashing pearls of thought in their beaks.' A song with a pearl in its beak would be a great attraction in the programme of a popular concert.

We need not go far abroad in search of mixed metaphors. This is a supremacy in which the House of Commons holds its own, as it claims to do in every other contest of life. It has been my lot to hear a good many speeches in the House of Commons, and I have from time to time jotted down a few of the gems of metaphor strewn on this historic floor. Mr. Shaw's *chef-d'œuvre* will find a fitting parallel in the remark made by Mr. O'Connor Power, another able speaker, who caught Sir Stafford Northcote, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, tripping in the matter of his

Resolutions in respect to the business of the House. In his ingenuous manner, the Rt. Hon. Baronet had too plainly disclosed the notorious fact that the Resolutions, whilst professing to deal with the general conduct of business, were aimed directly at obstruction. Whereupon, up jumped Mr. O'Connor Power, and with triumphant manner exclaimed: 'Mr. Speaker, Sir, since the Government has let the cat out of the bag, there is nothing to be done but to take the bull by the horns,' which he forthwith did, debating the matter as especially dealing with obstructionists. It was in a similar access of passionate emotion that, during a debate on the foreign policy of Lord Beaconsfield's Government, Mr. Alderman Cotton solemnly declared that 'at one stage of the negotiations a great European struggle was so imminent that it only required a spark to let slip the dogs of war.' It was on the same night, and during the same debate, that Mr. Forster observed: 'I will, Mr. Speaker, sit down by saying,' &c. Mr. Forster has always been an adroit politician; but what new sort of manœuvre this is that enables a man to 'sit down by saying' remains unexplained.

Of the same class of mixed idea was Sir Drummond Wolff's declaration during the debate on Mr. Bradlaugh's admission, that 'if the member for Northampton were to be admitted, he would vote with a millstone round his neck'—an awkward appanage to a man in walking through the lobby, more especially on nights when the Obstructionists resort to the practice of repeatedly challenging divisions. A weighty argument somewhat akin to this was used by Mr. Hopwood, in the Session of 1879, when talking in Committee of Supply on the subject of vaccination. 'Don't'—said Mr. Hopwood impressively, addressing himself personally to the lamented Admiral, who happened at that moment to be the only occupant of the Ministerial benches—'Don't drive the steam-engine of the law over people's consciences.' This illustrates a fatal association of ideas which often leads even practised speakers into misfortune with metaphor. Mr. Hopwood on his way down to the House had probably seen a steam-roller in operation, and had watched its levelling effect upon the broken granite. Hence the too ready allusion. In the same Session, during a discussion on the Municipal Officers Superannuation Bill, an Hon. Gentleman opposed the measure on the ground that it 'was opening the door for the insertion of the thin end of the wedge,' a preliminary process which should at least tend to make the work of the wedge easy. It was the same member who paid a compliment to the Chambers of Commerce as 'the intelligent pioneers who feel the pulse of the commercial community.' Here we have vividly summoned before the mind's eye a picture of a man—

probably in the uniform of the Guides, certainly with a pickaxe on his shoulder—going about on the Change feeling the pulses of the merchants and brokers. On the fifth night of the debate on the Address in the current session, Sir Patrick O'Brien in a luminous speech declared that the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act would merely leave the rotting sword festering in the wound.

Politics, like all engagements that heat the blood, lead largely to indulgence in metaphor. During the General Election Sir John Hardy, addressing the East Staffordshire electors, assured them that, if they sent him to Parliament, 'it would be a pledge against the dismemberment of the Empire.' This was not nearly so good as the elaborate and deliberate metaphor with which Mr. Thwaites, one of the Conservative Candidates for Blackburn, sought to recommend himself to the electors. He was speaking of the condition of the national finances, at that time in the hands of Sir Stafford Northcote. 'Unfortunately,' he said, 'the Government is on the wrong side of the book; but however, you have had a prudent Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he has done his best. He has done what I would like you, my friends, to do. When you have laid an egg, put it by for a rainy day.' Why electors of Blackburn should be expected to lay eggs is a question that disappears before the greater importance of the query, why they should save them for a rainy day.

In a different way, but quite in the same spirit, is this sentence from a recent article by the Rev. Mr. Haweis on an American poet. 'Sublime singleness of purpose! divine simplicity of heart,—the little child is again set in the midst of us by the dear Lord, and presently he overcomes the mailed Goliath with a sling and a stone.' This does not mean anything in particular; but surely such a mixing up of the Old and the New Testament was never before perpetrated by a gentleman who must of necessity have read both. A friend of the late George Eliot, writing to one of the daily papers on the private character of the great novelist, tripped only less grievously in attempting to adorn his text with Scriptural imagery. 'She possessed,' he writes, 'to a marvellous degree, the divine gift of charity, and of attracting moral outcasts to herself, *whose devils she cast out by shutting her eyes to their existence.*'

HENRY W. LUCY.

Plantp Banton.

CHAPTER I.

‘WELL, it’s the last time as ever I shall make this here v’yage,’ said Mr. Plantagenet Banton to a fellow-passenger on board the fine clipper ‘Conway Castle,’ as, behind her vigorous little tug, she was slowly manœuvring into the docks. ‘And now, sir, what do you take me for? We’ve been fellow-passengers, shipmates, so to speak, right away from the Cape to this, but I doubt if you’ve ever took the trouble to guess what I might be: now, have you?’

‘Well, to tell you the truth,’ was the laughing rejoinder, ‘I can’t say I have.’

So saying, the young man took a general survey of his much older companion, as though he sought to find a sign, in the outer man, of the other’s occupation. But he had seen him daily for some weeks, now, and found nothing more externally visible than he had seen upon the first day of their association. There was a rough, weather-beaten, coarse, vulgar, old tradesman, as mean, as selfish, as self-assertive as ever; but beyond these peculiarities, which were every moment displaying themselves in one way or another, there was no salient point of characteristics, and nothing in his demeanour or conversation to indicate whether he had been a butcher or a waiter, a squatter or a shoeblack—and he might well have been either.

A twinkling of satisfaction came into the old man’s shrewd, cunning eye, as he rubbed his palms slowly across each other.

‘No,’ he said, ‘not you. Well, here we are home again, and I don’t mind tellin’ you. The fact, is I’ve been a many things in my time, and so no wonder as you couldn’t guess, and I’ve made money and lost it, and made it agin and lost it agin, over and over. But now, you see, I’m gettin’ on in years, as one may say, and I’m come home to England to spend my days in rest and quiet. I’ve had a store, I have, and I determined, so soon as I’d got a clear five thousand, as I’d drop speculating altogether and drop b’isness too; and I have, and that’s why I’m here.’

‘Well, you’re fortunate to have enough to retire on,’ said the other passenger, who, possibly, was more interested in his own affairs than in those of his fellow-traveller.

‘Ah, but look you,’ went on Plantagenet Banton, ‘that ain’t

all. I've got that suspicious and careful, along of tradin', that I don't trust nobody with my money. Not I. None of your banks and the like of that. I've got the money about me now, and I mean to stick to it till I find a safe investment here at home. Five thousand, you think, ain't much of a fortune; no more it ain't for a gentleman, but I'm only just settin' up in that line of b'isness. I reckon to get close on three hundred a year for my money, and, if England ain't pretty considerable changed since I knew it, I take it I'll get on right enough. No, I ain't a gentleman and don't come of gentlefolks, but that's nothin', for I ain't got many relations.'

The old man chuckled as he gave utterance to this speech, but beyond the statement that he carried his fortune about him, it contained little news to the other passenger, who was growing weary of the old fellow, as he was already of the ship and all its associations.

'Ah,' continued Banton, 'no doubt you're goin' home to a fine lot of friends; and so might I be, if I hadn't a took to roamin' so early, but there's nothin' to grieve over in that. I'll pick 'em up fast enough; Planty Banton never was at a loss for a friend so long as he had the means of findin' a glass of grog in his pocket. Look ye here, the only relation as I know of, or ever want to know of, is a young nephy, but I never seen him, and he never seen me, and now I'm come over to introduce myself. He's a gentleman, he is, compared to me, and well off in his way, but if he comes a puttin' on any of his airs and graces with me he'll find himself in the wrong box. I mean to introduce myself and not let 'em know who I am; he's married, he is; and if his wife and him's agreeable like, and inclined to be friendly before they knows me, don't you see, I shall be agreeable to them arterwards, and I mean to leave them two my money when I'm gone. But if he or her either comes the fine gentleman, then I shall say, "Look'e yere; I come home to make you my heirs, but as you don't seem agreeable to the arrangement, you'd better find some other uncle as has got five thousand pound to leave you," and then I shall wish 'em good day, and you don't know Planty Banton if you think he's the one to change his mind when he's come to a determination of that sort.'

The conversation was broken off by the bringing of the ship up at her proper berth, and the planting of a gangway to the dock side, when, after some brief leave-taking, the passengers went each their several ways. Cumbered with only a small hand-bag, Banton made his way from the ship, and left the docks behind, having stated his intention of returning on the following day, to

see to the removal of his various boxes and packages, each of which was duly and conspicuously labelled with his name. While the old man is finding his way to his nephew's suburban cottage, we will travel by a more expeditious means to see what awaits him.

John Banton had commenced life as a commercial clerk, but a series of fortunate events had, at an age little over thirty, made him the head of a small business of his own. For some months his success had been as remarkable to his associates as it was agreeable to himself; but his prosperity appeared to be but short-lived. A series of embarrassments overtook him, and he found the utmost difficulty in procuring a sufficient supply of ready money to provide the ordinary necessities of his household. One of his most unflinching principles had ever been to keep himself free from debt, but at the period of his financial vicissitudes this became a matter which had left the difficult stage behind, and was fast approaching the impossible. A stricter economy than had for some time been practised in his home became a necessity; in this, however, his wife readily aided him, gladly dispensing with one and then with both of their servants, and reducing expenditure to a very low minimum.

Upon the day of the uncle's arrival in London, Banton happened to have returned home somewhat earlier than was his wont upon ordinary occasions. It was little after five o'clock when he found himself at his door, and he gained admittance with his latch-key; but his eye, which had been accustomed to a neat and orderly house, was struck by the growing untidiness of the place under the unaided hands of his wife.

'Jane,' he said on entering, 'those steps are fearfully dirty.'

'My dear,' returned his wife, a pale and delicate woman, of a refined and handsome cast of countenance, 'I am too well aware of the fact, but they shall be cleaned by the morning. Of course I could not let Sunday come round and see them in that state; but I must wait till after dark. It would hardly do to let the neighbours know that I did such work.'

'No,' answered her husband, with a soft sigh that the necessity existed for her performing such painfully menial offices, 'and it is tremendously plucky of you to go through all this without grumbling. But never mind, dear; I hope next week to see a clear turning, and then we shall soon be all right again.'

A rapid smile flitted across his wife's weary features.

'How glad I am to hear it,' she said; 'it will give me more courage to go on; but you know we *must* keep up appearances.'

With a word of assent to this proposition, John Banton passed through the house and out into the garden at the back. It was

a small but in every way comfortable house, with far more accommodation than was needed for himself and his wife; they had no children. A central passage gave access to rooms on either side, while, upon the floor above, bedrooms were disposed in nearly similar fashion. The house was detached, with a fair garden, while it was quiet, secluded, and not overlooked by opposite neighbours.

In the garden Banton began to amuse himself among his flowers, which, now that September was rapidly advancing, required considerable tending. Working his way gradually along a bed, he came presently round to the front of the house, when, rising suddenly from a stooping position, he became conscious that he was the subject of contemplation to a stranger, who was leaning very easily over the gate. The gate was flanked by hedges on either side, and as they were both tall and thick the lower gate afforded the only means of seeing into the garden. The house stood upon a public road, but good taste usually induced passers not to render their observation so painfully obtrusive as did this person.

Banton was about to ask what he sought, in something like indignation; but his words were stopped by a remark from the stranger, who was an old and certainly not prepossessing man, weather-beaten and hot from having walked some distance. None other than Plantagenet Banton.

'The name of this yere house struck me as peculiar, sir,' he said. 'Glossop Lodge ain't a name as one comes across every day, and if your own name should happen to be Banton—John Banton—now, that would make it more peculiar still.'

'That does happen to be my name,' returned the subject of the address, rather coolly. 'Might I ask——'

He could not see much more than the old man's face, as the door completely concealed his figure; but it occurred to the younger man that, judging from the expression of that face, which was a mixture of low cunning and meanness, tinctured with the familiar impudence of a broad grin, very little was lost by the limitation.

'No, you mightn't ask,' returned Planty, as he loved to call himself; 'you don't happen to have a uncle same name as yourself?'

'No,' said Banton, thoughtfully; 'John is not a very uncommon name, but I don't know another John Banton.'

'Ah,' exclaimed Plantagenet, with a twinkle in his eye, 'that's it. But, maybe, you've an uncle as is called Planty Banton—Plantagenet, eh?'

‘I believe I have,’ was the answer, ‘but he’s been abroad for years, and as I happen never to have seen him——’

‘Well, what?’ inquired the old man eagerly.

‘Why, I don’t happen to know him.’

Planty drew a sigh of relief.

‘Ah,’ he said, ‘I thought you was goin’ to say you wasn’t much interested in him. Now, I do know him, and rather intimate too.’

Seeing that Planty stopped at the end of his sentence, and regarded Banton with an expression of peculiar significance, the latter felt called upon to make some remark; but, nothing more elaborate occurring to his mind, he gave utterance to the single ejaculation, ‘Indeed!’

The old man indulged in a curious internal chuckle, which appeared to come from some hidden machinery considerably out of gear, and which had a singularly irritating effect upon its hearers.

‘I suppose,’ he said, ‘you didn’t mean to ask a poor old wayfarer, as one may say, to jest come in and have a rest? not along of his knowin’ your uncle, now?’

‘My dear sir,’ returned Banton, opening the gate, but at the same time considerably exercised in his mind to imagine what sort of an uncle it must be who was on intimate terms with such an unmitigated old ruffian as this, ‘by all means come inside. We, of course, are very willing to welcome a friend of our long-lost relation, although at present our domestic affairs are a trifle disorganised. The servants are out for the day.’

The old man entered the garden, beaming with satisfaction, and taking a comprehensive glance around as he came.

‘Servants, eh?’ he said. ‘So you do it regular, do you? more’n one servant? How many, now? maybe two—three?’

‘No,’ answered Banton, writhing inwardly at the evasion he was compelled to employ, ‘we never had more than two.’

‘Oh, indeed,’ said this intolerable old colonial—this confounded old Africander, Banton termed him in his heart—‘well, two’s enough. But look’e, I’d a made one on ’em clean them steps before takin’ of holidays.’

The extreme dirtiness of the door-steps had struck Banton himself upon his return home, and this reminder brought the colour to his cheeks. He smiled feebly as he replied:

‘They do look rather untidy. I’ll see that they are cleaned before the morning.’

Then he led the way hurriedly into the house, and called to his wife. Hearing voices in the garden, she had been hovering near, and appeared instantly.

'This is a friend of my uncle Plantagenet,' he said; 'the uncle who has been in Africa so long,' he added by way of explanation.

Mrs. Banton appeared more amused than otherwise struck at the eccentric appearance of the quaint old man. She bowed, but reflecting that a bow must appear somewhat incongruous to this old fellow, who seemed like a cross between a river pilot and a mechanic in holiday attire, she smiled and held out her hand.

'That's what I call friendly,' said the visitor, gripping her fingers with a pressure of tremendous force, 'that's what Planty your uncle, mum, would af done hisself.—My name's Peter Bream.'

'Will you take a seat, Mr. Brim?' said Mrs. Banton.

'I thank you, mum,' returned Planty, 'but Bream it is—B-r-e-a-m, not Brim, if it's all the same to you.'

Again that strange and irritating chuckle came from him. He was saying to himself, 'You can't be too partic'lar over a name, specially when it's a false one as you've only jest invented.'

Some indecision appeared as to who should be first to continue the conversation, but, after a momentary hesitation, Planty saved his entertainers all trouble by commencing fire himself.

'Touching this uncle of yours,' he said, seating himself with great composure, 'you've no doubt heard he's what they call eccentric. So he is; there's no denying of it. Me and him's been friends a'most ever since he's been out in them parts, livin' together and follerin' one another about together, so that we come to be that intimate it seemed as if we never shouldn't part. But the time come and I've chucked it up—retired, as you might say; and when I was a comin' over here, "Planty," I says, "tell us all about your relations." But Planty he laughed and he says, "Relations," says he—"why, they ain't much to brag about, nor many of 'em." "So much the better," says I; "but tell us where they hang out, for be sure I'll look 'em up." "Well," says Planty, "I had a father and mother once, and them you'll find near on Kennington Church—in the yard, I shouldn't wonder—it ain't no good lookin' after them; and I had a brother, but he's gone after his parints, and now there's none of 'em left but my nephry." "Ah," says I, "and what like is he?" "Why, I never seen him," says Planty, "but I have heard as he's a educated young chap, and well to do. Not such as the likes of you would cotton to." "Oh," says I, "and why not?" "Because," says Planty, "he's a gentleman, and you ain't, and ain't never likely to be." "Thank'e, Banton," says I, "you ain't much to brag on yourself; but tell us where this young chap lives, and I'll go round that way, blowed if I don't."

Planty stopped to see what effect his narrative had made, but as it produced nothing except a smile from each of his hearers, he presently took up the thread of his narrative again, diverting its current to his own affairs.

‘And so, you see, Mr. Banton,’ he went on, ‘here I am. I only come into London to-day, and ain’t got no luggage with me beyond this yere small bag I carry in my hand; I must look that all up in the morning. But mark you, I’m no pauper. I don’t mind tellin’ of you, I’m worth three hundred a year, clear, and nothing to do for it.’

‘You will have some refreshment, Mr. Bream?’ asked John Banton: ‘a glass of wine?’

‘I thank you,’ returned Planty with considerable stiffness, ‘it’s a’most dinner time, I take it.’

With so broad a hint, there was nothing for it but to ask him to remain to dinner.

‘If you’ll excuse a frugal meal,’ said Mrs. Banton, ‘we shall be very happy if you will stop with us.’

‘But,’ added her husband hurriedly, ‘having given the servants a holiday, we shall have to wait upon ourselves. However, if a chop and a glass of grog——’

‘Say no more,’ exclaimed Planty, waving his hand. ‘I’m your guest, and thank’e. The man as can’t be happy upon a chop and a glass of grog ain’t one as Planty—ain’t one as no one would be likely to get on with.’

‘Then I must ask you to excuse me a moment, Mr. Bream,’ said Mrs. Banton; and she left the visitor alone with her husband, while she went to busy herself in the preparation of the dinner.

‘Where do you propose to stop, Mr. Bream?’ asked John Banton, more as a means of opening conversation than out of any inquisitive motive. ‘At some hotel, I presume; or have you friends in this neighbourhood?’

‘Well,’ answered the old man, with his horrible chuckle and a cunning twinkle in his eye, ‘I ain’t rightly made up my mind. There ain’t no friend just hereaway, as I know of, but no doubt I shall manage.’

Then he added, so suddenly as to startle his host into an invitation he immediately regretted, ‘I was thinking perhaps you might find a spare room, jest for one night, for your uncle’s intimate friend?’

‘I shall be very glad to give you a bed,’ answered unfortunate Banton. Then he remembered their present biting impecuniosity, and wondered what his wife would say to having this old boor in the house for the night, and how the difficulty of servants

could be overcome. He determined to let her know immediately, but to achieve this it was necessary to make some excuse to get out of the room.

'You'd better have a glass of wine, Mr. Bream,' he said; 'I'll get you one.'

The old man gave a ready assent, whereupon Banton hurried out of the room.

'Jane,' he said to his wife, who was busy in the kitchen, 'like a fool, I have let this old wretch get me to promise him a bed for to-night. He must have it now, and——'

'But, my dear,' returned Mrs. Banton, 'how is the work to be done? If you had said in the first instance that we had no servant it would not have mattered, but now we shall have to keep up the pretence in the house as well as out of it. I will do my utmost, but it will be difficult; and you know those steps really must be cleaned.'

'Well,' said the unfortunate Banton, whose desire to be hospitable had got him into this plight, 'we must do our best. I will try to keep him quiet, and we must get him to have some grog and go to sleep after dinner.'

So saying he returned to the small study, where he had left the old man, taking with him a bottle of sherry and a couple of glasses wherewith to beguile the time until dinner should be ready.

Unconscious that his presence was such a sore discomfort, Planty met his host with a beaming smile, and gladly joined him in a glass of wine, which he poured down his capacious throat in a fashion that was essentially his own, becoming with each libation more and more loquacious. Meantime Banton was wondering how early the visitor would be up in the morning, and whether it would be practicable to clean the old wretch's boots without being discovered.

By the time Mrs. Banton came in to say that dinner awaited them in the dining-room, the bottle of sherry had nearly vanished, and the visitor was happy as need be wished.

'Well,' exclaimed Planty, when he took his seat at the dinner table, his eye making a rapid survey of the board as he spoke, 'I don't see nothin' to make excuses for yere. Chops, sure enough, and right good ones too; and this yere's a bit of cold biled bacon, I take it; well, you've got a few potatoes along of it, and a drop of beer. Now, what more can you want? Many's the time as Planty and me'd a give no end for the likes of this yere feed.'

'You see, Mr. Bream,' Mrs. Banton exclaimed, 'people in London think so much of good living.'

'And this all comes of your generosity!' exclaimed the visitor, before she had time to conclude what she was about to remark. 'If it hadn't a been for your givin' of your servants a holiday you'd a been havin' your four courses and all. But there; I'm happy enough on this, and like it better. Some may call it frugal, but it suits me better without no show.'

And indeed it appeared to suit him; for he swept away the mutton-chops, which had been obtained on credit for to-morrow's dinner, with an alacrity and gusto which somewhat startled his hostess, and then he pounded into bread and cheese, drinking beer with it in a manner to frighten the storing capacities of a thirsty boating man.

'And now I'm done, and thank'e,' he said at length, pushing his plate away from him and wiping his mouth upon his coat-sleeve. Then he dipped his hands deep in his trousers' pockets and leant back in his chair, smiling benignly. 'There's only three things wanted to make this yere perfect,' he added after a moment's reflection; 'a toothpick, a pipe, and a drop—jest a wee drop—of grog. But them I know is coming. Whisky's my taste.'

'Certainly you shall have those,' said Banton, smiling at the old man's unfettered freedom of manner; 'and I think——'

'But Lord,' interrupted Planty, 'I'm a thinkin' of myself too fast. You'll have to swab decks first: I'll lend a hand.'

So saying he rose from his seat, and was about to commence the process of clearing the table, when Mrs. Banton checked his ardent goodnature.

'No, no, Mr. Bream!' she cried, deprecating his desire to make himself too much at home, 'we will leave these things here and go into the study.'

'Right, mum,' cried Planty, 'that's quite right; and let them lazy servants clear up when they come back. What time might you be expectin' of 'em?'

'Certainly that is the best plan,' interrupted the host, rising rapidly from his seat before his wife had opportunity to invent a suitable answer to the old man's awkward query; 'let us go at once. Come along, Mr. Bream.'

He led the way to the smaller room to which the visitor had first been introduced, but Planty insisted on accompanying Mrs. Banton to the kitchen to procure hot water and the necessary glasses for grog-compounding. When these were duly provided he settled himself on a sofa and reproduced his former smile of satisfied enjoyment.

'Now, this yere's what I call prime,' he said, sipping contentedly from his steaming glass, and drawing long volumes of

dense smoke from his greasy old pipe; 'I'm good at this till one o'clock.'

Banton groaned: it was not yet eight.

'I'm a fair sleeper in my way,' continued the guest, 'but I don't care to go to roost till to-morrow mornin', as we used to say. One o'clock's my time, and then I turn in regular. But I must have my rest. If I don't get my proper sleep, a drop or so of laudanum upon a lump of sugar settles the job soon enough.'

'That's a very excellent plan. Nothing interferes with one's comfort so much as want of sleep,' said Banton, determining that the very means of procuring somnolence which the old man suggested should be adopted long before one o'clock.

'Why, look at me,' went on Planty; 'if it hadn't a been for my regular habits and sound sleep, where should I be at my time of life? I'm a gettin' on in years—pretty much about the same age as your Uncle Planty, Mr. Banton; but here I am with plenty of life and vigour left. "There's life in the old dog yet, eh?" But talking of Planty, there's more things than the matter of age that him and me's alike in. Now, Planty said as he hadn't got no relations except you. Well, no more ain't I; and what's more, there ain't a soul in the whole of England as knew I was a comin' home to 'em, and if I was to drop straight away right through the earth, right out in Australy, who'd miss me? Not one soul, lad, not one blessed soul.'

As the old man tucked his legs up on the sofa to procure additional comfort and ease, his host sincerely wished that the descent to the antipodes, to which he had alluded, might take place forthwith. Already he had finished one large steaming glass of toddy, and was getting on well with the second. Banton had indulged in a small libation, and now his empty glass stood before him; not that he was actuated by any desire to refrain, but because he was doubtful how far his stock of spirit would go.

'You're not a drinkin', sir,' cried the guest suddenly; 'have jest another drop.'

'Oh, yes,' replied Banton, 'I've been having some;' and to appease the old man he emptied the remaining whisky in the bottle into his own glass. 'How are you getting on, Mr. Bream? The bottle, you see, is empty, but I have some more upstairs.'

'Fust class,' answered Planty, puffing vigorously at his pipe.

After one sip from his replenished glass, Banton had a sort of misgiving as to how far his statement was correct.

'I'll run up and bring down another bottle,' he said, and at once proceeded upon this mission.

In his dressing-room he found a bottle half full of whisky.

It was standing upon his little medicine cupboard, in which he suddenly remembered there was a phial of laudanum.

‘I’ll give the old gentleman a few drops in his whisky,’ he said to himself with a smile. ‘He says he is accustomed to it, and that it readily sends him off to sleep, and, Lord knows, it would be a blessing if he would commence to snore at once, rather than keeping me up to hear his talk.’

He took out a little ribbed blue bottle from the cupboard as he spoke, and poured some of its contents into the spirit; then hastened downstairs to rejoin his guest.

‘Here we are,’ he said cheerfully, as he re-entered the room where the old man was contentedly smoking and enjoying his grog; ‘you see there’s another shot in the locker.’

‘That’s right,’ cried Planty, immediately emptying his glass, and rising to mix a fresh jorum.

The grog brewed to his satisfaction, the old man resumed his recumbent position on the sofa, took one long gulp, placed his glass upon the floor within easy reach, and allowed his head to lie back upon the soft cushion.

Banton watched his movements with a smile. Twice the old man smacked his lips as if in thorough enjoyment of the grateful liquor, and then remained silent.

‘I call this very fair whisky,’ said Banton, after a short pause, ‘and you can drink any quantity without harm.’

But his guest made no reply; he appeared to be already falling off into a quiet doze.

The host waited a few moments longer, and, as the old man remained perfectly still, he rose from his seat and stole quietly from the room.

‘A few moments’ respite, at any rate,’ he murmured with some satisfaction.

CHAPTER II.

‘JANE, he’s asleep,’ said Banton to his wife, who was busy in the kitchen. ‘He told me he always has a few drops of laudanum when he can’t sleep, and it at once sends him off. I gave him a little dose in his grog, and he went off very rapidly; but then, I fancy he was getting drowsy before.’

‘I am very glad to hear it,’ returned Mrs. Banton. ‘There are several things that must be done, and I wouldn’t have him see me for the world. I’ll run out and wash down those steps at once, and then I’ll see about making his bed. But we must get rid of him in the morning: and it’s Sunday, too.’

'Never mind,' cried Banton; 'I'll invent some story to account for the servants not appearing—delayed by a railway accident, or anything will answer the purpose: and to get rid of him, we must plead that we are going to spend the day with friends at a distance. He's sure to feel drowsy when he wakes up, and perhaps we shall get him off early to bed. We will let him have breakfast first thing, and then turn him out. What an awful old ruffian he is! If my uncle is anything like his friend, I hope he'll never turn up. I always heard he was rather rough and eccentric, but why should he make friends with such a bear as this?'

'Well, never mind,' said his wife, 'we'll manage somehow. But he hasn't left us much for dinner to-morrow,' she added plaintively.

Then she laughed, and proceeded busily with her work. Occupying himself over sundry little matters which required attention, Banton found that more than an hour had elapsed before he thought again of his guest; then, fearing that he might wake and come out in search of his host, he returned to the study.

'What, still asleep, Mr. Bream!' he cried laughingly, as he entered the room, seeing that the old man was still recumbent, and apparently not in the slightest degree altered in position since he had himself left the room. 'You're enjoying your nap.'

The room seemed, when his words ceased, to be in painful stillness. Not a sound came from the old man's lips; so far, indeed, from the snoring which Banton had mentioned in his thoughts as preferable to his conversation, there was not even the faintest murmur of the softest breathing.

Seized with a sudden apprehension of he knew not what, he hurried to the old man's side. His face was quiescent, and no motion of breathing was visible, while his eyes were wide open with largely dilated pupils. For a single instant he laid his hand upon the pulseless heart, then turned to the door and called loudly to his wife. In a moment she was beside him, pale and frightened at the tones of his excited call. Banton said nothing, but pointed with extended finger at the form of the old man upon the sofa.

Mrs. Banton's quick eye immediately grasped the situation, even including the apparently trivial detail that the smoker's pipe had slid from his fingers on to the floor.

'Good heavens, he is dead!' she whispered, in affrighted tones. 'How awful! Oh, John, run for a doctor.'

Her husband was standing with an expression of the most unspeakable terror depicted upon his features, and he made no effort to obey her behest.

'Jane,' he said, in low hoarse tones, 'I must have murdered him. It was not laudanum I put in the whisky, but some of

that fearful aconite spirit. I did it hurriedly, and almost without looking, and there must have been enough to kill a dozen people in what he drank. I remember, now, that the laudanum was in a smaller bottle, and this was the sample of the awful stuff I brought away from the office to prevent mischief occurring by accident. I ought to have destroyed it: I ought to have destroyed it.'

'But it was an accident,' returned his wife. 'We must get a doctor and see what can be done. For pity's sake, run and bring in anyone you can find.'

She stooped over the recumbent figure, but neither her ministrations nor those of a more skilled person would have been of any avail. Not the faintest vestige of life remained in the body. 'What are we to do? What are we to do?' she cried helplessly. 'Poor old man, how awful it is!'

'Hush!' said Banton, in a low hoarse whisper, which was absolutely painful to hear. 'Come away.'

Then he turned down the gas, and led his wife slowly from the room. They returned to the dining-room, where he brought his wife to a chair and seated himself opposite to her.

'If this should be found out,' he said slowly, in the same horrible tone he had before used, 'it would mean ruin to us. How could we prove that it was not actual murder? He may have money with him, and if so, how could we clear ourselves when it became known to what straits we are reduced? A doctor would see instantly that he had been poisoned, and would easily discover what with. We must——'

He paused in contemplation of the hideous thought which presented itself, while his wife asked in an awe-struck whisper,

'What?'

'Discovery means ruin—total and absolute immediate ruin.' Banton went on presently, 'We must not have this made public. Jane, will you help me? will you assist in a horrible task, for our mutual safety?—a horrible task, but not a criminal one. We must think of ourselves; we can do nothing for that poor old man.'

His wife looked at him in terror.

'What?' she asked again.

'He told me not one soul in England knew that he was coming home, and said that if he were suddenly to disappear no one would inquire after him. He said if the ground were suddenly to open, and he were to slip through to the other side of the world, not a single soul would miss him or ask after him. He had no friends and, he said, only one relation, who did not even know that he was here. We must bury him, and never let a soul know what has occurred. Ay, and we must do it quickly too. Come.'

The last words were uttered with passionate rapidity, and without giving his wife time to frame reply or remonstrance, he seized her arm and led her back to the room in which the corpse lay. Every pocket of the old man's garments was carefully searched for anything which might give a clue to the whereabouts of the one relation he had spoken of, but they contained nothing to throw the slightest light upon the identity of the old man himself or those to whom he belonged. A few odd scraps of newspaper were the sole literary contents of the pockets, and there was neither purse nor pocket-book. He had a watch, and in one pocket the chink of coins was audible when they moved the body; but from this they both turned with a shudder, as though the very thought of the dead man's money had filled them with a sudden horror, more intense than had arisen from the hideous accident itself.

Everything was at once returned to the pockets, when Banton reverently spread a handkerchief over the face of the corpse, and once more turning down the gas, led his wife out of the room.

To question the rectitude of what her husband proposed to do, never for a moment entered into Mrs. Banton's thoughts; her only anxiety was how best to carry his intention into execution. She was unable to suggest, but to assist she was most amply willing. There was a stable attached to the house, which had, however, never been used otherwise than as a lumber-place. Entrance could be obtained to this stable without going out of the house itself, a door giving direct communication from one to the other.

The thoughts of both husband and wife intuitively directed themselves towards this stable, and thither their footsteps led them in silence. Without uttering a single word, Banton procured a lamp and obtained a spade from a shed near the stable door; then, proceeding always in the same grim silence, he divested himself of coat and waistcoat and commenced laboriously to remove a portion of the brick flooring, his wife all the time watching his every movement with wide-open, awe-stricken eyes.

But to a woman of Mrs. Banton's energetic temperament inactivity was infinitely worse than hard labour; she could work and exhaust herself in assisting her husband, but she was quite unable to stand by an idle spectator of his toil. As, therefore, he removed brick by brick, she took them from him, and piled them neatly and carefully by.

When one brick was removed from its bed the others were with slight trouble detached, and the work proceeded speedily enough, a space of sufficient size soon being cleared ready for the digging

operation to commence. But the removal of the earth was a sadly wearisome task, and before a depth of six inches was reached, Banton was dripping with perspiration, while his wife was racking her very soul in anxiety of mind. Every footstep that sounded in the roadway seemed like the call of an accusing angel, and the slightest sound for which a reason was not immediately apparent sent the hearts of both beating with unaccustomed rapidity, and brought hot blood surging up to their heads.

Not a word had been spoken by either for over an hour of this hideously anxious task; then an interruption came to their labours. A loud step sounded on the hard road; halted at the gate for a few moments as if in indecision, went on, and again returned.

‘Heavens! what is that?’ said Mrs. Banton in a painful whisper. ‘A policeman. Can he be coming——’

But, ere her sentence was concluded, the step again sounded on the gravel, and the man had passed on.

With pale face and trembling hand, Banton had stopped in his work, but the gradually diminishing sound, as the step went farther in the distance, restored courage to his flagging spirit.

‘It must be a policeman,’ he said below his breath; then he again plied his spade with redoubled energy.

But, in another moment, a new interruption came.

‘Oh, my God, what is that!’ cried the affrighted woman. ‘*He* is moving.’

The spade fell from Banton’s nerveless grasp, while drops of sweat, other than those produced by his labour, sprang to his brow and mingled with the copious stream.

‘What?’ he asked, in a low harsh whisper.

Then a long silence ensued, while both man and wife stood in a posture of anxious attention, awaiting a repetition of the sound. No other noise followed, however, and they were content to set the first disturbing cause down to an over-excited imagination.

After that no new disturbing influence arose, save when the neighbouring church clock struck, and their own hearts beat in rapid pulsations in unison with the clanging bell. But it was a task of fearful dread and awful anxiety.

It was long past two o’clock in the morning before the hole—even in their hearts they could not bring themselves to term it a grave—was sufficiently deep. Then Banton stepped up on to the level ground, mopping his brow with his streaming handkerchief. But still he uttered never a word.

With anxious eyes his wife watched his every movement, in dire fear lest he should go upstairs, bidding her remain below alone. Her soul quailed at the bare suggestion of the idea. And,

truth to tell, he would have been very loth to go to that dreaded chamber without the accompaniment of his partner.

The single gas-burner sent a dim glimmering light over the room in which the body of the dead man lay, and there was something so grim and horrible in the sharp outlines of the extended form in the semi-obscurity, that Banton, shuddering, instantly upon entering the apartment turned on the light to the full. When they removed the handkerchief from the face it was seen that the mouth stood partially open—the result of the commencing droop of the lower jaw—in a sort of hideous grin, and that the wide-open eyes were fixed in a glassy stare of ineffable ghastliness.

Mrs. Banton started in terror as her eyes encountered the horrible sight, and then her husband, equally filled with unspeakable awe, again spread the handkerchief over the features, and tied it at the back of the head.

Still the work progressed in grim, horrible silence. Banton posted the room door widely open, and cleared away every obstruction in his course, before essaying to remove the body; but every effort to lift it was unavailing, whether from its intrinsic weight or that his own strength was exhausted by the heavy toil of digging. He managed to get the dull dead mass half off the sofa, when his foot slipped and the body fell over on the floor with a heavy crash, which brought a shriek of terror from the lips of Mrs. Banton.

In desperation the frenzied man seized the feet of the corpse, and commenced dragging it towards the door. It was a heavy weight to move, however, even by this means, and, as he was allowing it to slide down the narrow lower stair-case, no effort of his strength could prevent it bumping from stair to stair with a dull sound, that seemed like a mute protest at the indignity.

At length, however, he had got it into the hole his labour had dug, and was commencing to shovel the earth hastily in upon it, when his wife touched him lightly on the shoulder. With a violent start, and an exclamation of horror in his nervous fear, he turned to her, the spade dropping from his grasp, which had relaxed in his alarm.

‘John,’ she whispered, ‘shall we bury him without one word of prayer?’

Seeing no protest in her husband’s expression, she instantly knelt beside the grave, and commenced a few impassioned words of prayer for forgiveness of the sins of the poor old man, who had so suddenly been called unprepared from the world. With his face buried in his hands, Banton knelt beside her, but no sound came from his lips save when she finally paused, and then he gave utterance to a deep, low-voiced ‘Amen.’

For a few moments they remained in silence beside the grave, after their prayer was concluded ; nor was it for some time that Banton could bring himself to throw the earth in upon the still corpse.

When, at length, this task was completed, and the bricks were again carefully placed in their former position, there remained, as speaking evidence of the horrible deed, a grim pile of earth that could not be forced into the hole. This might, however, be left for the present.

When they again returned to the little room upstairs, the bright gleams of morning sunshine were struggling through the spaces round the window blind, and, here and there, between its laths, mingling with the yellow flare of the still burning gas. Banton hastily drew up the blind, and turned out the gas, when a glare of brilliant daylight illumined the apartment.

Once again a chill shudder ran through his frame as the bright clear light fell upon the remains of the things which had really caused the awful tragedy of the previous evening—the empty glasses and bottles, and the other accompaniments of the brief event. There yet remained in one of the bottles some of the poisoned whisky. This Banton instantly threw away, while the bottle itself he smashed into a thousand fragments, so that no further accident could by possibility occur.

Coming back through the hall, after this had been accomplished, his wife still following his every movement as though she held in the most absolute dread the idea of being left alone, even in this brilliant daylight, his eye lighted upon what neither of them had given a previous thought to—the hat, stick, and bag of the dead man.

‘Good heavens!’ exclaimed Banton, new fears taking possession of his mind ; ‘the bag may contain ample evidence of his friends.’

With a superstitious horror, they shunned the room of the tragic event, going with the bag into the dining-room, to examine its contents. One by one the articles were removed, the trembling fingers bringing forth to expectant eyes nothing but the most commonplace articles of a meagre toilet, until the final article of all was reached ; an oblong packet of papers, which crackled with a peculiar but not unfamiliar sound.

‘Bank notes!’ exclaimed Banton, looking up with affrighted glance.

And such they proved to be, some moderately new, many old and stained from usage ; some for large amounts, most for ten or five pounds only ; but, taken in the aggregate, their total amount

was exactly five thousand pounds: the sum the old man had spoken of as the value of his fortune.

With no definite object in view as to their ultimate disposal, Banton safely secured this treasure under lock and key, then proceeded to destroy the other articles, for which purpose a fire was lighted in the kitchen. It was now past eleven o'clock, so that to think of going to bed was of course out of the question; not that the faintest desire to sleep was manifest in either of them, notwithstanding the harassing toil in which one had spent the night. Now that the task was accomplished in full, they sat cowering and shivering over the fire; and directly boiling water could be procured, strove to soothe themselves with strong tea.

So was their Sunday ushered in.

CHAPTER III.

To both John Banton and his wife that Sunday was a day of restless torment; they wandered aimlessly about the house and through the garden, alike unable to sit still or leave their home with any definite object in view. And, as the day had found them unable to eat, so the night failed to bring them repose. Mrs. Banton passed through the usual hours of rest in a nervous tremor, that left her in the morning pale, haggard, and full of harassing fears; while her husband, notwithstanding the terrible bodily fatigues of the previous night, tossed uneasily upon his bed, tormented by a thousand conflicting and equally distressing thoughts. To his mind, the idea of touching the few pounds rattling in the pocket of the dead man had been as revolting as any possible combination of horrors; but when, in the quiet of the succeeding night, he began to consider what should be done with the thousands, quite other impressions presented themselves to his view. Who could claim the money? How might he restore it to its rightful owner, even if he could be found? Did such an owner exist? Failing the discovery of such an owner, why should not part of the money, in the shape of a temporary loan, serve to help him out of some of his pressing difficulties? Would it be wrong to use the money? Was it worse to employ part, at any rate, of it to ease his pressing wants, or allow it to remain idly lying where he had carefully placed it away?

He rose in the morning feverish and wan of countenance, with a devil at his heart prompting him to take a part at least of the money for the time being, and to replace it so soon as the fortune of his own business should turn in the right direction.

A second night, almost equally lacking in repose, resolved him in what he deemed the right course to pursue.

Ere he started for his office upon the Tuesday morning, his wife stopped him in the hall.

'John,' she said, 'yesterday was the most awful trial I have ever endured in my life. I cannot—no, I really cannot—stop another day alone in this house. I should go mad.'

He kissed her gently as he replied:

'I told you this week, I hoped, would bring me better luck. Yesterday I found the means of providing some ready money; it is all right again. Find a servant as soon as you can, but meantime get someone in from the village to do the work and keep you from being alone.'

From this moment the domestic affairs of the household resumed somewhat of their wonted course. A temporary assistant was easily found, nor was a permanent servant more difficult of acquisition; and the necessary money being provided, the painfully rigid system of domestic economy, which had become a temporary necessity, was abandoned. Banton was, however, becoming nervous, fretful, restless, and terribly depressed—effects probably produced by the worries of his business, combined with the horrid remembrances he could not for a moment banish from his tortured thoughts. His wife, always of delicate mould and high-wrought nervous temperament, grew wan and far thinner than she had ever before appeared, while every sudden sound caused her to start with tremors and fears of intangible ills. The hideous Saturday night was never once, in the most distant manner, alluded to by either of them, but its horrors were none the less ever present to their minds, in painful thoughts by day, and terribly ghastly dreams by night. It would, indeed, have been much to their mental comfort had they freely discussed the event instead of keeping the carking remembrance fresh in the secrecy of their thoughts.

A week passed away, and Saturday again came round: a clear, bright morning, fresh and balmy, such as only an English September can produce, when the heat of summer is replaced by the calm softness of early autumn's genial airs, and the garish tints of richest greenery and all the gayest tones of the blossoms have given way to the mellow tints of tree and shrub, and the softened richness of the flowers that bloom at this season.

After breakfast, when her husband had started for his daily occupation, Mrs. Banton strolled into the garden and idly paced its trim walks, her mind ever dwelling upon the all-absorbing topic that was destined to be so notable a landmark in her life. Her eyes were fixed gloomily upon the ground as she paced along,

apparently lost in reverie, but actually most fully alive to every outward sound. A sudden opening of the garden gate, and the crackling of a heavy tread upon the crisp gravel, made her turn with a start, her mind instantly filled with vague apprehensions and painful misgivings. To her unspeakable terror, she found herself face to face with the burly form of a tall policeman. A half-stifled scream escaped her lips, and her face became instantly of ashy paleness, as an almost irresistible impulse to turn and fly from the spot took possession of her mind.

The man politely touched his hat, and begged her pardon, while he fumbled amongst a bundle of papers which he held in his hand.

'Ah,' thought the unhappy woman, 'it is discovered. Let me find courage to face the worst.'

'What is it?' she asked, in a feeble voice that ill accorded with the courage which was actuating her.

'Beg your pardon, ma'am,' said the policeman, producing a long folded paper, and handing it to her. 'Mr. Banton.'

With trembling fingers she took the paper, when the man touched his hat and instantly turned upon his heel. How her heart beat as she almost flew up the steps, and rushed to the seclusion of her own room! Full of the direst apprehensions, she hardly dared unfold the large white sheet, but screwing herself up to the proper resolution, and determined to know the worst at once, she opened the paper, and, oh bathos! found it merely related to an election of guardians of the poor.

The reaction was more than her unstrung nerves could bear. The paper fell from her grasp, while first a laugh and then a scream escaped her lips—two nervous demonstrations which were immediately followed by copious streams of scalding tears. Hearing her scream, the servant from below came at once to investigate the cause; but, although she was able to administer some sort of comfort, it was long before she could soothe her mistress's state of hysterical distress.

'Poor dear,' said the sympathetic woman, when at length she retreated to her proper domain, 'she do seem overdone, what with one thing and another.'

One more week passed away, when Saturday, the day which seemed to be destined to come laden with new terrors connected with the terrible tragedy, again arrived. Another seven days had served in no way to ease the mind of either husband or wife, who were both still full of the same needless terrors. No mention had been made to Banton of the terrifying incident of the policeman,

for his wife justly considered his mind as already sufficiently laden with cares and troubles, and she saw no reason for adding to his mental worry by heaping upon him the thoughts which had distressed herself.

Just before dinner, they were strolling in the garden, when the servant came to say that the landlord of the house wished to see Mr. Banton.

‘Ask him to come out in the garden,’ said Banton; then he added to his wife, ‘I wonder what he wants?—the rent is not yet due.’

In a moment the landlord, a small builder of the neighbourhood, appeared before them.

‘Good evening, sir,’ he said. ‘I thought, as I was passing, I’d just look in to tell you I shall have the new house, down in Park Street, comfortably ready for occupation about the time you will be leaving this. If you should think of remaining in the neighbourhood, I don’t think you would find——’

‘What on earth do you mean?’ asked Banton, laughing at what he considered must be some amusing blunder. ‘I have no idea of moving.’

But now the landlord seemed himself somewhat surprised.

‘Don’t you, sir?’ he asked, laughing himself. ‘But, surely, you know the house is coming down? They’ll offer you some compensation, of course, for leaving, but——’

‘House coming down!’ repeated Banton, aghast at the horrid possibility of discovery the words presented. ‘I really don’t understand what you are alluding to.’

‘Why, haven’t you heard, sir? it’s the talk of the place.’ Banton shuddered. ‘The cutting for the new line will run just across here, and, of course, the house must come down.’

‘Ah, to be sure, now I remember,’ said Banton as calmly as he was able; ‘I have heard the thing spoken of, and I’m much obliged to you for mentioning it. Good evening.’

The landlord beat a hasty retreat after this curt dismissal, not by any means impressed with the amount of politeness his tenant had extended to him.

Banton hurried indoors, and threw himself into a chair.

‘Do you see what that means, Jane?’ he said in an irritated tone, which was quite a new development. ‘If they cut through here, the—thing in the stable will be unearthed, and then——’

His wife came over beside him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder. ‘John,’ she said softly, ‘I think, after that awful night, I could do anything. We must remove it.’

He looked up with a start, and his wife was struck by an expression in his eyes which had never been there before. Was all this trouble telling upon his brain?

He gave a short laugh, but made no further remark, burying his head in his hands and sitting immovable until dinner was announced.

The meal was a perfect farce; neither could eat, and they were both unable to converse. Banton drank a great deal of sherry, and, before the cheese was upon the table, got up and retreated to the drawing-room, where he stretched himself upon a sofa, and lay lost in the bitterness of his own reflections, his eyes immovably fixed upon one spot, in a soulless stare. Here he remained until bedtime arrived, when he saw before him nothing but a night of sleepless distress.

Two more long weary weeks dragged themselves slowly by, but they brought no sort of relief to the tortured mind of either Banton or his wife. They were both paler, thinner, more nervous, greatly in want of the bracing effect of relaxation and change.

After a night of distressing restlessness, equally painful to both of them, Banton announced to his wife, one morning at breakfast, that he proposed to go away to the sea-side for a change. The question of the exact course of the new railway was not yet definitely decided, but the destruction of their house was confidently relied upon. The ground had all been surveyed, and they now awaited only definite notice.

'A week at Ramsgate will do us both good,' he said; 'I'm sure you need it badly enough, Jane, and as for me, it is an absolute necessity.'

'I am sincerely glad to hear that you can manage it, dear,' returned Mrs. Banton. 'I have stood up as long as I possibly could, hoping not to be compelled to give way, but I am beginning to despair of my ability to hold out longer.'

'We will start on Saturday, then,' he said; 'and I hope we shall come back more able to keep up than either of us is at present.'

The very prospect of this holiday, which would give a brief change from the perpetual presence of the hideous associations they had been hitherto afraid to leave, brought something like appetite to both of them, and even cheerfulness. Breakfast that morning was a brighter and better meal than the house had known for many a week. And when Banton went forth from his door, there was a smile upon his lips and something of his old elasticity in his step. But at the very moment a grim spectre was tracking his footsteps; something neither he nor anyone else could have

suspected : but it was there, nevertheless, rapidly descending upon him.

As he strolled up the quiet road, he opened his morning paper and commenced a desultory perusal. Almost the first word which caught his eye, however, was his own name in large type. His interest was immediately aroused, then his wonder, and finally consternation. He stood momentarily still, to peruse the few words that were so full with ominous import.

'PLANTAGENET BANTON.—Notice is hereby given, that if the boxes bearing the above name, left on board the "Conway Castle" on her discharging at the ——— Docks upon the —ult., are not removed within one month, they will be sold, with their contents, to defray cost of rent and other charges.'

The name and address of some well-known shipping agents followed. Banton read the notice over and over again before the real import of the words struck his mind ; then he tore the paper into a multitude of shreds, and scattered them upon the roadway.

'She must never know this,' he said ; 'she has suffered enough already ; she must never even guess at the real fact. It was my own uncle—oh, God of heaven forgive me, it was my own uncle !'

A cool October wind laden with heavy moisture buffeted him as he walked and gradually penetrated to the innermost portions of his clothing ; a chill dampness, enough to send shudderings and shiverings almost to his very marrow, but he paid no heed to the discomforting elements. With eyes bent upon the ground, he strode rapidly forward, regardless of direction or aught else, conscious only of the fact that his uncle had sought him out as a stranger, and that he had poisoned him. Aimlessly, helplessly, hopelessly he wandered forward, repeating at short intervals only the four words, 'He was my uncle. He was my uncle.'

The sun had been struggling to penetrate the inky clouds earlier in the morning, but now the effort had been abandoned, and the mist had it all its own way. The breeze increased in intensity, and the almost imperceptible rain grew to very decided drops, each of which brought with it a shiver of its own. But still Banton walked steadily forward, now on the path, now in the roadway, always forgetful that he had started with the intention of going to London, such overpowering possession had that one horrible idea taken of his mind. The rain saturated every garment about him, and reached his very skin, but, cold as it was, it failed to chill his fevered form, or even remind him that he carried an unopened umbrella in his hand. Ever his thoughts had the same burden, 'It was my uncle.'

At length he stopped and stared wildly about him ; he was far

in the open country; but although two hours had been occupied in his wandering, the place was still familiar to him, so well he knew the neighbourhood for many miles around.

‘I was both a fool and a coward,’ he cried. ‘What need was there to hide the deed? It was an accident, and everyone would have known it as such. I was a fool.’

Then he started forward again, stepping with hasty tread over the dripping ground, and splashed through puddles and pools all equally unheeded.

Suddenly he burst into a laugh. ‘The money,’ he cried; ‘the cursed money! That would have told the tale, and we should have swung on the gallows—ay, both of us! Man and wife side by side, a pretty sight for the public to stare at! Two murderers at once.’

Again he ceased in his walk, and once more a harsh jarring laugh broke from his lips.

‘I could have burnt the bank notes—burnt every one—and who could have suspected us then? But they won’t hang Jane. No, not this time; I was coward enough, but that would be more cowardly still.’

He resumed his walk presently, seeming never to weary, and always at intervals returning to the old theme, ‘He was my uncle.’

Mid-day was long past ere he appeared to wake to a consciousness of his position; but then, it was not with any idea of going to the city that he began to retrace his steps.

‘That will be best,’ he muttered, ‘that will be best,’ as he set his face resolutely in the direction of his home.

The rain had made no attempt to clear off, but seemed to increase in density as the day advanced. The wind, however, lulled, and the piercing chilliness of the atmosphere somewhat decreased.

It was five o’clock before Banton reached his home, drenched as though he had absolutely been wading through water, footsore and bedraggled, but intent upon the one purpose that had brought him back to his own house.

Going stealthily indoors, he made his way quietly to the place where the bank notes found upon poor old Planty had been stowed away. Some few had already been spent, but the bulk remained intact. These he took from the safety-place and hurried up to his dressing-room. Then he made a pile of the paper in the grate, and, applying a match, saw the whole heap gradually disappear under the fierce influence of the fire. This was what he had returned to accomplish, and this done, his task, he thought, was complete.

The ashes he spurned with his foot before throwing himself upon his bed. But now exhausted nature gave way, and, wet as he was, he fell almost immediately into a heavy sleep.

At intervals in his perturbed slumber groans escaped him, while ever and anon, half-uttered sentences came murmuring through the open lips. A groan louder than its predecessors attracted the attention of his wife, who had come up into the adjoining room. She at once hurried to his side, but started back in dismay at the figure of unutterable wretchedness which lay coiled upon the bed, where the stains of the damp and muddy clothing had turned the fair white quilt into a terribly untidy likeness of its usual respectability.

'Heavens, John!' she cried, 'what on earth is this? Are you ill, dear?'

He groaned again, and moved uneasily in his sleep, but it was not until she had half raised him from the bed that he really awoke.

'John, dear, you are wet; oh, so horribly wet,' she said. 'Do not sleep in this state. Oh, why have you not taken off this wretched clothing? It is absolutely dripping.'

He shook himself and opened his eyes; but their gaze was not the expression of intelligence she was accustomed to. He glared wildly at her for one moment, then cried in fierce accents, 'No, you are not my uncle!'

'Oh, heavens, it is brain fever!' She uttered the words in a horrified whisper, and the next moment rang a violent peal upon the bell.

When a servant appeared she had already removed part of the wet clothes that hung about him, and, without stopping in her task, bid the woman run instantly for a doctor. Without a moment's hesitation the servant started upon her errand, perceiving at once that something unusual was wrong, and meantime Mrs. Banton proceeded to undress her unfortunate husband. But it was a troublesome task, for he was perfectly unconscious of the utility of what she was doing, and, though he made no absolute resistance, he offered no sort of aid.

At length the task was accomplished, and when she had rubbed his moist body with a rough towel she got him, passively enough, between the blankets, and sat by to await the coming of medical aid. She would have administered brandy to him, had it not been that the strongest conviction possessed her that he was attacked by a raging fever. Happy for her had he been!

As she sat in this painful vigil, her husband, half dozing in his weariness, uttered at intervals broken sentences, the burden of

which was ever the same, 'You are not my uncle. He was my uncle. He was my uncle.'

When the doctor came and saw the patient, the portentous gravity of his face sent an awesome chill to Mrs. Banton's heart. He made a careful diagnosis of the case, and asked a perfect shoal of questions of the afflicted wife, but no amount of pressing could induce him to express a decided opinion. The constant repetition of the words, 'He was my uncle,' although it conveyed no definite idea to the mind of the doctor, yet gave to Mrs. Banton a sort of clue to the thoughts that were running through her husband's brain. She could answer the doctor, as she thought, with perfect truth in the negative, when he inquired whether such a relative had been lost; but she could add nothing to that statement to aid the man of medicine, beyond the fact that her husband had seen an unusual amount of trouble lately.

The doctor promised to send round a soothing draught, and added that he would return the first thing in the morning, unless he should be needed in the night, by reason of Banton becoming extremely restless; but he declined to say whether or not he had fallen into a fever.

His own opinion was, however, formed beyond possibility of question, as was evidenced by the few words he uttered for his own edification as he returned homewards. Those simple words were, 'Mad beyond a doubt, poor devil.'

To dwell upon so painfully distressing a scene would be but needless prolongation of a hopeless picture of misery.

Banton never became violent, his madness seeming to resolve itself almost into idiocy; but his case was utterly hopeless. His sufferings terminated in the course of three or four years, and now both he and his wife lie side by side in the churchyard of their parish church, for her system never recovered the shocks to which it had been subjected, and, about the same time as he breathed his last, she passed peacefully away, a victim to a terrible malady, the seeds of which had long been slowly germinating in her constitution. Her pale and delicate face had hinted many a day that consumption would claim her eventually as its own.

Strangely enough, the projected railway was diverted almost at the last moment, so that the pulling down of 'Glossop Lodge' did not become a necessity, and it stands to this day. But who amongst its later inhabitants has ever guessed that it was once the scene of so horrible a tragedy, and that it is the only monument remaining to the three victims of the hideous event?

A Romance of the Nineteenth Century.

BY W. H. MALLOCK.

CHAPTER IV.

There may be in the cup
A spider steep'd, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom; for his knowledge
Is not infected.

LADY WALTERS was a woman of extreme sweetness of manner, yet with a touch now and then of subdued humour, as of a woman who had known the world—*had* known it, rather than knew it; for knowledge of the world can be forgotten like other knowledge, and from certain gentle natures it slips away easily.

She and Lord Surbiton had an extremely friendly greeting, and settled down at once into a talk over old days. As for Vernon, his position was less comfortable. The Duchess introduced him to Miss Walters, who had at first been unaware of his presence: but the instant she recognised him the smile died on her lips, and she acknowledged his bow as coldly as any young lady of fashion who seems to deny an acquaintance in the very act of formally making it.

Vernon felt utterly worsted by her perfect *savoir faire*; and what added not a little to his suffering was that the Duchess should witness his discomfiture, without knowing what he felt sure was the cause of it. Too proud or self-conscious to risk any further repulse, he listened silently to the girl's answers, as the Duchess put her through a rapid catechism. 'We have taken,' she said, 'a villa beyond Nice, in the country. We arrived but three days ago, from Florence. We came over here this afternoon for the music; but missed our train back again, and so had to remain for dinner. I don't know what we should have done if Colonel Stapleton, whom I have known from a child, had not secured a table for us. I think this place horrible. I was here once before, and I detested it.'

Vernon watched her intently as she was giving these answers. The moments were few; but to him they were like a long dream. He seemed to become familiar with all the folds of her drapery, and each outline of arm or figure that her dress revealed or hinted at. Everything about her was dainty, delicate, perfect, as even a man could see. There was a subtle air with her of fastidious fashion, from her hat to her pointed shoes and the long black

gloves concealing her slim hands. He was keenly conscious of this impression, because it mixed with another in a somewhat singular way. There was a look in her face so clear and so ethereal, that all these lesser graces acquired a new character. She was not a woman of fashion only, but a woman of fashion who had the soul of a sibyl in her. Such, at least, was the way she impressed Vernon. As he looked at her now she seemed to be more lovely than ever, her cheeks paler and more spiritual, her large eyes darker and more expressive; and they were touched, so it seemed to him, with some high wistful melancholy.

The impression she made on the Duchess was different. Her Grace had found Miss Walters somewhat chilly in manner; so she brought her questions pretty soon to a close, and turned to Mrs. Grantly.

'What fun,' she said, 'we had at dinner to-night, hadn't we! Everybody was so amusing; and yet, were what we said written down for a stranger, there would seem, I have no doubt, very little to laugh at.'

'Precisely, my dear Duchess,' said Lord Surbiton, who had caught this remark, 'and for the following reason.' He had now the opportunity he had all this while been waiting for, of making himself heard and observed by the lovely flower-like stranger. 'In true conversation,' he went on—'conversation as distinct from discussion—the words by themselves are but a small part of the matter. Their magic depends on the unsubstantial pageant of association that is called up by them, and that forms and fades with the hour and the company they are uttered in. Conversation is a spell; it evokes, it does not describe. Like other spells, it is effectual only in a charmed circle; and like other spells, to outsiders it sounds gibberish.'

Lord Surbiton was well rewarded by seeing Miss Walters turn to him; though she did so chiefly as a means of avoiding Vernon.

'I am sure,' said the Duchess, 'I can't remember what we were talking about at dinner.'

'A proof,' said Lord Surbiton, 'of how well your Grace was conversing. True conversation is like good champagne. It exhilarates for the moment, but next morning we feel no trace of it.'

Vernon here broke silence. 'If true conversation,' he said, 'is like good champagne, true love is like bad. False and true love may seem just the same when we taste them. We only detect the true when we find that our head aches afterwards.'

'That,' said Lord Surbiton, drawing a deep sigh which made his satin neck-tie creak, 'that is why a serious passion is so great an educator. But its work only begins when the pain it

causes has left us. I have observed, Miss Walters, in one of my own writings, that a woman of the world should always have been, but should never be, in love. She should always have had a grief: she should never have a grievance.'

'Why,' asked Miss Walters, 'do you say this of a woman of the world especially?'

'Because it is only in the world, or in what we call society, that intercourse with our fellows is really a completed fine art. It there *is* what elsewhere it only tends to be. Men who profess to think gravely or to have grave ends are accustomed to speak of society as the type of what is vain and frivolous. Perhaps they are right—who knows? And yet society is the logical end of the whole of this world's civilisation. For my own part, of all the follies that I ever set any store by, fashion is the one I could still find most to say for; and would its votaries only try to deserve as well as to attain it, it would perhaps be as openly praised as it is inwardly coveted.'

'Fashion!' echoed Miss Walters, looking in blank surprise at him.

'Yes,' he said, 'fashion. No wonder you look incredulous; but you know not what fashion is. Fashion is the daintiest form of fame, and sometimes of power also; and were it only as wide and lasting as it is delicate, it would unite in itself the elements of all human ambitions.'

'And is ambition,' said Miss Walters, 'all that a man lives for?'

'Surely no,' said Lord Surbiton; 'and those eyes of yours must have discovered that for themselves. Man is in general moved by three forces—ambition, love, and hunger; but love, as we all know, destroys the appetite; ambition destroys love; and fashion absorbs, or at any rate sways, ambition.'

These general maxims did not much delight the Duchess; and she betrayed at this juncture that her thoughts had been somewhat wandering.

'Captain Grantly,' she exclaimed, 'I wonder whose are those horses that are waiting there at the door of the casino—I mean the pair of greys, in that rather smart-looking carriage. I watched them drive round, five minutes ago; and the near one is really a first-rate stepper.'

This remark put a stop to Lord Surbiton's eloquence, for Miss Walters turned round, and began to look at the horses; whilst her aunt, hearing a railway-whistle, consulted her watch, and said they must soon be moving. 'However,' she added, 'there must be plenty of time yet, as Colonel Stapleton said he would come and see us safe to the station.'

'Damn Colonel Stapleton!' muttered Vernon to himself abstractedly. Then, suddenly recollecting himself, 'I too,' he said, 'am reminded to think of moving; for I see my carriage is already there waiting for me.'

'What!' said the Duchess, 'and is that fine turn-out yours, Mr. Vernon?'

'By Gad, my dear chap, you *are* a swell,' said Captain Grantly, putting his hand on Vernon's shoulder.

Wealth has a certain power over those even who are least touched by it. It calls their attention to the man possessing it, if only to make it worth their while to despise him; and Vernon was now conscious in an instant that Miss Walters' glance was fixed on him. He turned quickly to her, and was about to attempt saying something, when Colonel Stapleton arrived, panting and out of breath, exclaiming to Lady Walters that he had been looking everywhere for them, for the last ten minutes; 'but now,' he went on, 'your train has gone, and there is nothing left for it but to stop the night here. I'll engage rooms this instant, if you'll let me, at the Hôtel de Paris. The Princesse de — and the Prince for the time being, have just left unexpectedly; so I know they can take you in: and we'll show Miss Cynthia a little more of the life here.'

'No, no,' said Miss Walters with a hasty frown, 'those rooms are perfectly sickening.' Vernon observed her closely and with extreme surprise. She spoke in a manner that would have been rudeness to any common acquaintance, even of long standing: the Colonel, however, was not in the least abashed by it; he only eyed her with a look of quiet amusement. 'Come, little vixen,' he whispered, 'don't be naughty. I'm sure Aunt Louisa will give her vote for staying.'

Lady Walters, however, would do no such thing; and was already inquiring somewhat nervously if there would be any difficulty in getting a carriage. Captain Grantly at once volunteered to order one, and was just starting, when he was recalled by the practical Duchess. 'You may as well find out first,' she said, 'where Lady Walters wants to be driven to; for at this time of night they will often refuse to take you.'

'Oh,' said Lady Walters, somewhat troubled by this, 'it is the Cap de Juan. It is a long way by road, I'm afraid.'

Vernon felt all the blood rush at once to his face, and for a moment his heart stopped beating. He was about to speak, but the Duchess had already forestalled him.

'The Cap de Juan!' she exclaimed; 'why, that settles everything. Come, Mr. Vernon, now is your opportunity. Why, my

dear Lady Walters, here is a young man with a carriage and horses ready and only too anxious to drive you back to your very doorstep.'

A rapid look of annoyance passed over Miss Walters' face. 'We couldn't think,' she said, with a cold politeness, 'of taking Mr. Vernon's horses so great a distance. He is hardly aware, perhaps, of what a journey there is before us.'

'On the contrary,' said Vernon, 'I am perfectly aware of it. If I am not mistaken, we are neighbours, and live within a hundred yards of each other. Your house must, I think, be the Château St. John, and your garden and mine are but parted by one hedge.'

After this there was nothing more to be said. Lady Walters, whatever her niece might think of him, was much taken with Vernon's look and manner, and accepted his offer with the friendliest cordiality. Vague anticipations as to what the drive would bring forth, thronged his mind in an instant. The whole party walked towards the carriage; and by his side was that fair glimmering figure who now in common courtesy could not avoid his companionship. He was full of a new excitement, half mortified, half expectant. He handed the old lady into the carriage, and saw her seated comfortably. It was now Miss Walters' turn. Vernon looked at her timidly, as if afraid to offer any help to her; but he took courage, and put out his hand. Did he dream?—was it only a fancy?—for the whole thing was the work of a few seconds. It seemed to him that her hand, as it touched his, did so at first lightly and coldly, and then suddenly softened into a moment's relenting pressure. At the same time, for a moment, she raised her eyes to him, and he fancied that the look in them was not coldness, but a soft reproachful inquiry.

'Well,' said the Duchess, as the carriage drove off, 'I'm glad Mr. Vernon has at last got what he wanted, though Miss Cynthia, at first, was, I must say, very snubby to him. However, one can never judge by this. Perhaps, when we go to the Cap de Juan, we shall find them an engaged couple. Who knows?'

'I know,' said Mrs. Grantly, 'and I'll bet you anything we shall not. A man like Mr. Vernon will never marry. He's exactly,' she added, dropping her voice, 'like a younger edition of Lord Surbiton; and I guess they're a couple of shams—the two of them.'

'I think,' said the Duchess, 'that Mr. Vernon is charming.'

'Yes—to know,' said Mrs. Grantly, 'but not to depend upon.'

CHAPTER V.

It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden ;
Too like the lightning which doth cease to be
Ere one can say, it lightens.

VERNON and his friends were meanwhile hastening homewards. Lady Walters had addressed to him a few more kind civilities, eyeing him the while with a look of trustful friendliness ; but her niece had hardly said anything, and the three soon sank into silence. Every influence, indeed, seemed to persuade to it—the easy motion of the carriage, the rhythmic tramp of the horses, the soft fanning of the night air, and the pageant of sea and mountain that was sweeping past them like a dream. Here was a gaudy villa, surmounted by a huge coronet, the home of some Russian gambler ; here, with domes and minarets, a dwelling yet more fantastic. Scents of flowers blew down to them from the gardens ; and over the garden walls hung spiked aloes and cactuses. Then presently the scene grew wilder. On the right, wooded gorges slanted up into the mountains ; and on the left, the sea below them broke into fairy bays. All this seemed to absorb Miss Walters ; and her eyes being thus occupied, Vernon was able unobserved to observe her. He had once remarked in one of his more delicate moods, that a woman whose dress is the perfection of fashion, is rarely herself the perfection of real refinement. But he now felt inclined to reverse this judgment. Miss Walters' whole toilette, it has already been said, was exquisite ; and Vernon, man though he was, was still quite conscious of this. But whilst he was conscious of it, she seemed not to be. Her finery seemed on her to be simple as the beauty of a rare flower. 'This fact,' Vernon wrote that same night in his diary, 'was to me typical of the entire impression she made on me. All the graces of this world seemed to be hers so naturally, that she was as little troubled by their possession as the saint is who has renounced them. The effect her presence had on me was very singular. It did not at first concentrate my thoughts on herself ; but it moved amongst them like a wind, and stirred them in all directions. Vague aspirations of many kinds awoke in me. I longed, in grotesque rotation, to make poetry, to ride hard, and to pray : and at last I could almost have said aloud to her, Show me the way to Heaven, my beautiful earth-born angel—the way onward and upward, to the goal where a man would be. But my soul was still lonely, it wanted no companionship ; I had not the least impulse to add, And let me struggle thither with you.'

The state of mind that Vernon thus ascribed to himself was broken by Lady Walters, who at this moment woke up from a drowsy reverie, and said somewhat abruptly:

‘What a pity it is that poor Jack Stapleton never married! He is naturally such a kind, good creature. It is self-indulgence that has ruined him.’

‘And do you think,’ asked Vernon, ‘that marriage always improves a man?’

‘Not always,’ she said, ‘and it never affects a man as it does a woman; yet some men, Mr. Vernon, are ruined for the want of it, and they are often those of the warmest and sweetest natures. You know the man that his friends call a good fellow—who, like a sun-flower, always turns towards happiness. If such a man has a wife he cares for, he will live that he may make her happy: but if left to himself—I have seen this in so many cases—he will live, not to give pleasure, but to find it. And to like consorting with happy people is a very different thing from trying to make people happy.’

‘Ah me,’ exclaimed Vernon, ‘how many a genial companion might take that to heart! But how should you say that marriage affected women?’

‘Why, with them,’ she said, ‘it is an entirely different thing. When a woman marries with affection, her whole character changes. She grows absorbed in the things that absorb her husband; and these, through him, become a new life to her.’

‘Did I seek,’ said Vernon, ‘to make any woman my companion, I should start with a different hope. I should wish to find one who, if she had my tastes at all, had had them before she knew me; and that her already possessing them were the cause of her sympathy, not that her acquiring them for my sake were the signs of it. I should like her life to stand on its own basis; and in her pursuits I should like to have a constant rival, that should keep my affection fresh with a kind of stingless jealousy.’

‘Ah,’ said Lady Walters with a smile, ‘that is friendship, not marriage.’

‘Then friendship, not marriage,’ said Vernon, ‘is the thing that charms me.’

Lady Walters only looked at him with a gentle incredulity, but said nothing, and the conversation dropped. Presently Vernon was aware that Miss Walters was watching him. He hardly dared to look at her; but their eyes met. It was but for an instant: each turned from the other; and as if for some relief in embarrassment, they turned towards Lady Walters. Only a glance was needed. They saw that she had fallen asleep. Then

Miss Walters' eyes again met Vernon's, and the two for the first time felt they were alone together. Vernon was ill at ease. The remembrance that his companion's first sight of him was when he was in the middle of his foolish scene with the French-woman, abased him in his own estimation. He leaned his head back and looked up at the stars, whilst his thoughts went wandering into many devious ways. Presently Miss Walters was startled by a sudden ejaculation from him. What he uttered was a single line from Hamlet :

Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I !

His voice had all the ring in it as of a man thinking aloud ; and its sound startled himself no less than Miss Walters. Sitting up sharply, he began a confused apology. ' I have a tiresome way,' he said, ' of repeating poetry aloud to myself. I am always doing it when alone, and if anyone overhears me, I am sure they must take me for a lunatic. I remember how I frightened a groom once in a dog-cart by breaking out just like that with a bit of a Greek chorus. Are you,' he went on, ' that he might say something commonplace—' are you fond of poetry, Miss Walters ? ' He asked the question without thinking, nor did she herself seem in any way to attend to it ; but when he ventured to look again at her, a surprise awaited him. She was no longer sitting back cold and distant, she was bending slightly forward, and was watching him earnestly. He met her eyes, and they were not withdrawn from him. Full and unflinching, they still sought his own, and they were liquid with the enigmatic appealing tenderness which he had once before half thought he detected in them. Again he asked himself, ' Am I dreaming ? ' But this time he knew it was not so. A sudden consciousness had thrilled through him in an instant that a crisis in their acquaintanceship had passed. He felt that by his unguarded exclamation a barrier had been broken down : he had betrayed himself in some way into her confidence, though he knew not to what extent. A tingling tremor crept through his whole body ; the blood beat quickly in his temples ; his mouth, half-opened, drew breath audibly, and it seemed to him that the air was peopled by mute agents,¹ who were arranging between him and her some new undefined relationship. But whilst he bent towards her, there was a reverent awe upon him ; there was almost a worship in the freedom with which his own eyes fastened on hers ; and though his life had well accustomed him to a certain *libertinage* of behaviour, he did not dream even

¹ Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man
Than the mute agents stirring there.—WORDSWORTH.

of daring to so much as touch her hand. Near as she was to him, there was still some gulf between them—some unknown, some untravelled distance. And yet, when across this her voice came floating to him—for it was she who first broke silence—there was an appeal so winning and so tender in it, that more than atoned for its being so unsexed and passionless. It was like the voice of a spirit breathing in the evening wind.

‘Tell me,’ she said, ‘why are you here—by yourself, with no companion, and in this lonely place? Tell me.’

‘I am here,’ said Vernon, ‘to attempt a painful thing. There is some one whom I have long deserted. He is the only friend, perhaps, I ever really cared for; and even him I have treated cruelly, and have turned my back on him. I have almost forgotten his face, that I once knew so well. I have come here that I may try to renew my acquaintance with him.’

‘Who is it?’ she said abstractedly. ‘And yet,’ she added, recollecting herself, ‘of course I have no right to ask. I beg your pardon. I was forgetting what I was saying.’

Vernon went on, making no direct answer to her. ‘It will be a painful meeting if ever I find him again; I shall see him so changed, and know that it is my ill-treatment has changed him. My heart, if this happens, will, I expect, be either hardened or broken—perhaps both; for even a stone heart is not beyond breaking. Can’t you tell whom I mean by the description? You, perhaps, might be a go-between and a help to me.’

‘Who is it?—Lord Surbiton?’

‘No,’ said Vernon, smiling, ‘I mean myself. *Myself*, do I say? How hollow the word sounds to me! I seem sometimes hardly to have a self; but I feel, like a man in a dream, that I am being swept passively through changing states of consciousness, some pleasant enough, some dull and dreary, but they are all ghostly things; I have no abiding part in them, nor is one bound by any chain to the other. I seem to be swept through them as we in this carriage are being swept through this ghostly landscape. These changing trees and fields, as they surround and drift away from us, what hold have they on our inner life, more than so many shadows have? Tell me,’ he said, ‘does all this carry any meaning to you, or does it only seem to you like fantastic rubbish?’

There was a pause. Then Miss Walters answered him in a very low voice, ‘I can understand your meaning well—I think so—at least, part of it.’

When next she spoke, it was after a long silence. ‘Is Lord Surbiton,’ she asked abruptly, ‘a great friend of yours?’

‘Till to-day, it is many years since I saw him. Why do you ask me?’

‘Are we not,’ she said quietly, ‘known from our companions?’

‘Are we?’ said Vernon, thinking instantly of Colonel Stapleton; ‘I hope to God, not always!’ And he looked hard at her, with a perplexed wondering inquiry. Then he went on in a lighter tone: ‘Lord Surbiton at least would be little guide to you. He has a side for everyone, he is himself nothing. It is true he has a character in the midst of all his diversity; but even this he is always playing tricks with. He seems to carry about with him a sort of mental looking-glass, before which he is for ever making some different face. Sometimes he regards himself as a man of superhuman age; sometimes as a man endowed with eternal youth. Sometimes he praises virtue, sometimes free-living; sometimes he speaks with equal apathy of both. He has been showing me to-night all these sides of himself; and under pretence of telling me what I am, he has been giving me a lengthy account of what he himself would like to be. And yet, in a certain way, he attracts me. I always feel at my ease with him; and he says many, many things that in a perverse way I agree with. Sometimes I think, for instance, that of all life’s follies, fashion is the one that is best worth following.’

Miss Walters interrupted him. ‘Do not say that,’ she exclaimed with much earnestness. ‘I know fashion well; at least, I know quite enough of it; and nothing hardens the heart like fashion. I don’t use the word in the way common people use it; in their phrase, the whole world of birth and riches is fashionable: and please don’t think that I wish to abuse that, or that I have any admiration for rusticity or provincialism. The fashion that I mean is the fashion that you mean; it is the fashion that is a goal, not a starting-point—that is a new gilding coveted for the gold. And that curious artificial light in which alone the shades of social fashion are visible, whilst it opens our eyes to numberless small niceties, blinds them to all that is more real and deeper. Nothing but sin can take us so far from our true selves as that.’

‘Fashion may be artificial,’ said Vernon, ‘but it is not arbitrary, and its value is relative to the way in which each man wins it. But it is for each man the completest reward he is capable of. When the fool wins it, it is the fool’s completest triumph. When the clever man or the gifted man wins it, it is his completest triumph likewise. It is all the homage that he could possibly render due to himself discounted from moment to

moment. It is as though life were a continued song, and fashion were the refined measure of praise that was always greeting it. If you have ever read Goethe's "*Wilhelm Meister*," you may recollect a passage in which the same thought seems to have struck him.'

'Then, if that is the case,' said Miss Walters more coldly, 'why do you settle yourself at the Cap de Juan? You have no society there. You can neither dine out there nor give dinners. There are no drawing-rooms in which your entrance can make a flutter; nor can each evening be to you what a London girl's in the season is—a little epic of petty defeats or triumphs.'

'Don't turn away from me,' said Vernon. 'Let me try once more to explain myself. People think—perhaps you do too—that if a man does but wish to be open, an inquirer need but question him to extract all his tastes and motives. But there is no notion falser. Let a man have paints and brushes; put a sitter before him who shall remain quite motionless: will he need no skill and practice to be able to paint a portrait? It needs far more skill to describe one's own mind to another than to paint one's own portrait from one's image in running water. Ask a man to account for his own actions for even a single week, and he may answer you in a dozen contradictory ways, and yet each time be doing all he can to be truthful. You ask me why, if I love society, I am thus choosing solitude. That is a simple question; just now I had half answered it, and my half answer was true. I said that I longed for calm, that I longed to collect my thoughts, and so indeed I do. But this is not all. Other longings haunt me, and I sigh in the midst of calm for some excitement also. I get it, too, in my hermitage—one of the sweetest of all excitements. I have come to the Cap de Juan because I love the sea and the mountains; because I love the rocks that the sea beats against, and the trees and shrubs and flowers that the sea-air breathes among. The Cap de Juan is the loveliest spot in Europe; you who have but just come there can hardly know its loveliness. The whole green peninsula is an Eden of woods and gardens; and the life that surrounds you there is like a living idyll. Old brown crones crouching under the olive-trees, the peasant proprietor tilling his small field, the neatly dressed nursery-gardener surveying his glass frames, the retired domestic tradesman smiling over the gate of his little villa-garden—these are the living images that surround one, and that give to one's thoughts such a quaint delightful setting. A strange mixture, too, on all sides touches one of homely plenty and of wild luxuriance. Cabbages and palm-trees grow in the same enclosure. Between beds of kitchen

stuff, are strips starred with anemones; and pink almond-blossoms tremble amongst the apple-trees. And then—do you know the hill, dark with corks and ilexes, from which the white lighthouse shoots up like an obelisk? A little lower down, with spires of black cypress round it, is the bulging dome of a semi-Italian chapel. The building is outside a ruinous stained stucco, dull and disconsolate; and inside are frescoes and gilded columns and costly marble altars, and a sense of dim space, and lingering smells of incense. And on all sides but one of this enchanted region is the sea—the darling sea. Miss Walters,' said Vernon, 'when I speak of scenes like these, you may be sure I am quite truthful; and yet in society I can forget even scenes like these. But listen,' he went on, 'and let me tell you more. Far away from the world as this place seems, yet you can see Cannes on one side of it, and Nice on the other—far away, like dreams, over blue breadths of water; and breaths of that outer world seem to blow to it, fresh and faint and vague like odours of fresh seaweed. Is it not strange how our memories and our imaginations can mix our spirits with nature, and make all the world sing or whisper to us? Something like worldly wealth, too, is to be found in the place itself. There are several largish villas there, besides the Château St. John; and one gets a glimpse sometimes through the palings, of white balustrades and flowers, and gay terra-cotta vases. But the worldly wealth that all this suggests to one seems somehow to be far away and idealised, and to be sleeping a wizard sleep amongst the olives and green shrubberies. The only alien object is the great hotel, as it stands there with its rows of windows, furnished, but dead and tenantless till our friend the Duchess comes to it. But even the hotel has some poetry about it. It is built like an old château. It has quaint vanes on the gables, and flights of marble steps lead up to its doors and windows. It is just at the cape's point; and its domain of gardens with their long straight terraces, their arches of trellised roses, and their maze of winding walks, are bounded on three sides by the sea. Those gardens, silent and lifeless, not a soul but the gardeners now walks in them—the gardeners and myself. As for me, I wander about in them by the hour, and their green flowery solitudes have a pathos in them I cannot describe to you. Just now I was wrong, though. I am not alone in my wanderings. There is one stranger that I sometimes meet in them; and what manner of man should you think he is? He is an Englishman, who was once at Oxford, and once, too, in the Guards—a fellow-officer, by the way, of Captain Grantly's. But he is now a Catholic priest, invalided and worn with work, and is in this place

for quiet. I knew him well at one time; and to think how a few years have changed him! Religion gives poetry to some men; but with him, poor fellow, it has dealt in a very different way—it has knocked all his on the head. He was once full of romance and feeling, but he is hard and matter-of-fact enough now; and there is a curious dry reserve about him, whenever we talk together. He has the same effect on me that a dull rainy day has, or a dull sermon on death.'

'Are you,' said Miss Walters, 'afraid to dwell upon death?'

'Not in my own way—no. I often think of it. Let me tell you something more about the Cap de Juan. Beyond these gardens, a cape beyond a cape, is a long grey reach of low barren rock. It is swept by all the sea-winds; it is salt with the sea-foam. There is no soil on it but a few sandy patches; nothing grows on it but a few stunted grass-blades; there is nothing human visible till you come to the farthest point. But there, flat on the ground, lies a long block of stone; and flat upon this, a rough fragment of iron, eaten away and reddened with rain and rust. Go nearer, and you will see that it is a fallen cross; and you will see on the stone's face under it the marks of a rude inscription. The name is quite illegible, but there are three words which you can still read plainly. They are, "*Priez pour lui.*" I often wander out to that lonely grave; and I can think of death steadily enough, with the sea-birds calling round me. I could never discover the man's name who is buried there; but I gather that he was some solitary, who loved this cape and the sea, and perhaps had little else left to care for.'

'Ah,' exclaimed Miss Walters, 'that is the very place where I myself should like to be buried. Tell me,' she said, with a slight soft smile, 'do you ever think about what you would like to have written over you? It is a foolish woman's speculation, but it often occupies me; and this is what I should like to have put on my gravestone. It is a small verse of Tennyson's:

Come not when I am dead
To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,
To trample round my fallen head,
And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst not save.
Here let the wind sweep and the plover cry,
But thou go by.

Only, in that case,' she added with a laugh, 'I should of course be obliged to die where I could get my plovers.'

'Miss Walters,' exclaimed Vernon, 'you speak like my second self; my feelings on these matters completely answer to yours; and now I can tell you, I think, why I like society. I like it for

the same reason that I like solitude. Both are devices for keeping man at a distance.

Here let the wind sweep and the plover cry,
But thou go by.'

'You say,' she said, 'that your feelings answer to mine. I wonder if it is true they do so. However,' she went on frankly, 'you gave me real pleasure just now; and whatever may be your views about society, I have enjoyed thoroughly hearing you describe your solitude. I at least got to the true *you* there. You must be my guide some of these days, and show me all the beauties of this land of your adoption. We are near neighbours, are we not?—and now I think we need not fear to be friends. Am I right? Should you fear that?—for as yet you know very little of me.'

'See, see,' exclaimed Vernon, not directly replying to her, 'we are off the high road already: we are already entering our peninsula of gardens. Quick! let me answer your question whilst the moment still inspires me. Friends!—yes, friends we will be, if I am fit for your friendship. My fear is because I know much of myself, not because I know little of you: so first let me make you a very concise confession. I have seen much, I have gone through much in close relation with others; and I know my own deficiencies. I am no artist—I don't try to pass off as a genius; and yet I have something in me of what old Lord Surbiton calls the artistic temperament. All kinds of feelings sway me; all kinds of interests can allure me and awake my eagerness; but I have no constancy, no continuity of purpose, with regard either to things or people. Did you ever watch a cat chasing a butterfly? When the butterfly flits low, and seems within easy reach, the cat runs and leaps, and is all intense excitement; but let the painted wings rise a few inches higher—the excitement turns at once to indifference, and the cat will lie down on the grass, purring in soft forgetfulness. In such a cat I often see my own image. My interests collapse and escape me in just the same way; and I should wish anyone I was to be intimate with to remember this. Were I a coxcomb talking to some inexperienced girl, whom I was too self-indulgent to leave alone, and too conscientious to wish to trifle with, I should say to her, "Trust me not. Voice, look, manner—doubt one and all of them." But as for you, I will but say to you, "Take me for what I am." Only I should add, as the shopman says when you want to buy something cheap, "We don't recommend the article."'

'Be quite at your ease,' said Miss Walters; 'I know your meaning, and I should not be offended at it if it really contained a

warning which you had no wish to give me. I think I understand your temper. When you were speaking to my aunt about marriage, I watched you, I listened to you, I noted your tones and phrases. Have no fear for *me*,' she went on in a low voice; 'be your own natural self, put no false check on your sympathies. No nun dying a living death in a nunnery could be more shut out from all danger of love than I am—from all hope, my friend, and from all fear of it.'

After this there was silence, till Lady Walters woke up, and Vernon soon after was saying adieu to his friends on their own doorsteps.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh, speak again, bright angel, for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a white-wing'd messenger of heaven
Unto the white up-turned wondering eyes
Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,
When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

BUT the night was not yet done for him. He had refused to enter; he was anxious to be by himself again; and having sent his carriage away, was preparing to walk back through the gardens. The air smelt wooingly; a bright moon had risen, and the Château St. John was bathed in dazzling silver. But while he was still standing under the white marble portico, the door opened gently, and to his surprise Miss Walters herself appeared again. The cause that brought her back was unromantic enough. It was simply that some wraps had been left behind in the carriage; and Vernon's response was prosaic in exactly the same degree. But when all this was over she still lingered; her soft clear regard was still fixed upon Vernon. Presently she said, without preface, and hardly above her breath, 'You spoke of how you had grown a stranger to your true self. I have been wondering if you ever wandered *very* far away from it.' Then in silence re-entering the house, she cast back on him one more earnest glance, as she softly closed the door; and, half in farewell it seemed, and half imploringly, just raised to her mouth her delicate finger-tips.

Vernon wandered away like a man in a wild dream. What had come to him—the artist and the calm philosopher? A spell seemed to have been cast over him, and he was on a sudden transported into fairy-land. The gardens and the scent of the flowers had a new soul inspiring them, and his breast was full of a sweet fantastic tumult. In his own lamp-lit villa a delicate supper was prepared for him; but he did nothing more than taste it, and

he walked forth again into the mellow night air. He leaned his elbow on a pale glistening balustrade, and looked out over the sea. 'Sea of romance,' his unuttered thoughts began in him, 'once again you have a voice of magic for me. Inarticulate whispers of ambition, of passion, and of music float up to me from your enchanted surface. Sea of Southern moon and of Italian twilights, what eyes of famous lovers have looked out on you! The most musical of the world's love-songs have mixed over you with the vesper breezes! Pale restless waves, rocking under the stars of midnight, the limbs of the mermaids know you: the nautilus floats upon your bosom! Yes, and in me, too, up from the depths of my being, thoughts and longings are rising that sing like mermaids. Dark eyes of Cynthia, cheeks cold like her chastity—I know not, I know not, is it for you they sing?' He turned back to his garden; that too was enchanted. Were Oberon and Titania holding revel there? Bush and blossom seemed populous with crowds of airy presences. Every passion, every pleasure of his life, became a separate fairy, with its body some faint perfume, and its dwelling-place some half-closed flower-bell. In luxurious agitation he again returned to his sea-view. Far away over the waters the lights of Nice were glittering fair and distant like a braid of golden stars. On a little headland near him, covered with myrtles, another light twinkled, solitary, dim, and only just distinguishable. It came from a shrine of the Virgin, and his wandering gaze fixed on it. 'Whither,' he exclaimed to himself, 'whither are my thoughts drifting?—with what wings have they plumed themselves? How is my being lifted up into the air? Star of the Sea, holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me!'

Going indoors, he sat down to his desk and wrote his diary of the day's proceedings. Miss Walters filled up a large space in it, and a fragment of what he said about her has been already quoted. There was much more to the same purpose, more minute records of many of her tones and phrases; but so hard is it to be honest to even a piece of paper, that he made no mention whatever of his own self-accusations.

CHAPTER VII.

Day came,
Making the night a dream.

VERNON's first impulse when he unclosed his eyes next morning was not to sigh but to smile. He had still, as he thought of Miss Walters, a feeling of vague tenderness; but even this was half lost in a sense of life and buoyancy. Through the open window the air breathed gaily in on him; his ears were invaded by the free

splash of the sea, and he repeated the words aloud which he had used in his letter to Campbell, 'Oh, the sweetness and rest of this serene self-possession !'

Something caught his eye next moment which showed him at once that he must have long overslept himself. This was a pile of letters lying by his bedside ; and on the top was one in the handwriting of Campbell. What was Vernon's surprise to find on it no English postmark, but that it came from a place no farther distant than Cannes !

'Don't be angry with me'—this is what Campbell said—'and yet, when you see where I write from, I am certain you will set about being so. But try to understand me, by the aid of a little sympathy. A month ago, when you begged me to come abroad for the winter and take a villa with you, I refused you steadily—it seemed capriciously ; and this with no better excuse than that very poor one—my feelings. I said I did not feel up to it ; and on my word, Vernon, this was true—bitterly, deeply true. I had no heart to travel ; and though you may smile when I say so, the wretchedness I then suffered was crushing me. But at last in my dull sky I have seen a gleam of sunshine ; and I have begun to think that my plight may not be hopeless. I can eat again sometimes with a healthy natural appetite. I can laugh at a joke sometimes without affectation. For the last week in England my books and my pictures pleased me. And now events have so veered round with me, that I have actually come abroad as my best chance of happiness. I have done the very thing by myself that I so churlishly refused to do with you ; but you will forgive me when you see me, and that will, I trust, be soon. How willingly, under other circumstances, would I have spent the winter with you !'

One man can never converse with another but the contact rubs bare some new facet of his character, and he may often be startled himself at what he hears his own lips saying. Nor is this true of actual meetings only ; it is true as well of imagined ones : and such was the case now in a marked way with Vernon. Instantly, in imagination, he was in his friend's company ; he heard his friend's voice and he heard his own. An airy conversation sparkled with buoyant gaiety. Women soon were the subject of it : he was congratulating Campbell on his convalescence from love-sickness ; and was commenting on his own late adventure in a spirit of gentle but half-contemptuous carelessness. He ordered his breakfast out of doors at his favourite spot under the myrtles ; and such thoughts as these still busied his mind when, an excellent meal ended, he was leaning back on his seat a very picture of philosophic indolence, and was watching the silvery wreaths of his

cigarette-smoke as they rose and melted over him into the green shadows.

The friend he was thinking of was a very different man from himself. What had at first attracted the two was a certain delicate dilettantism and an indifference to the games and sports by which so many men's leisure is occupied. But deeper down in their characters this likeness ended. Vernon was restless, and loved the world; Campbell was shy and restful, and inclined to solitude; and when the one would be plunging in society in search of distraction, the other would be finding happiness in the study of books and pictures. The same difference went deeper still. Vernon had played with his affections; Campbell had kept his laid up in a napkin. There are passions, however, that lie near affection, although they are ever ready to ruin it; and to these Campbell had yielded with a quite sufficient openness. But there had been a flavour of innocence even about his vices. They had never approached his heart near enough to corrupt it; and now that at last it was really touched and troubled, he described his love with a clearness and frank simplicity which set Vernon wondering. As for Vernon, he could be voluble enough when playing with false emotion; but what he had felt of true, he had never had any gift for acknowledging.

Certainly now, as he sat under the shade of his myrtle-trees, emotion of no kind seemed to be much affecting him. Soon, however, his reverie was broken. A quick, firm footstep was heard upon the gravel, and, looking up, he saw Alic Campbell before him. Gladness will often leap like a fountain from lips that sadness freezes; and Vernon's delighted greeting was the very embodiment of radiant welcome. He was as happy with his old friend as a child with a new plaything. First he asked if his gardens were not charming; then if the sea was not divinely blue; then he quoted Mignon's song in 'Meister;' and then, with a verse from Horace, made Campbell sit down to breakfast. Campbell was by no means indifferent to the minor pleasures of the table; and many a heartache can be made to cease, on occasion, by the modest soothings of a good *pâté de foie gras*. Such dainties—and at this bright meal there were many of them—had the best effect on the lately dejected lover: his laugh came gaily, his eye gleamed with humour.

'Here,' cried Vernon, 'are two disciples of Horace; we have tried many philosophies, but we return to his at last.'

Huc vina et unguenta et nimium breves
Flores amœnæ ferre jube rosæ,
Dum res et ætas et Sororum
Fila trium patiuntur atra.

Alic, Alic, we are still young. When men are wise as we are, youth mellows quickly, but it takes a long time dying. I wrote to you only yesterday a letter of much wisdom. It was brimful at once of advice and prophecy; and now, strange to say, before you have got either, you have taken the one and fulfilled the other.'

Campbell smiled, and asked for some more Burgundy.

Vernon went on gaily. 'My letter,' he said, 'told you all the charms of this nook of mine; but, better than my descriptions, you can see it now yourself. Look about you, Alic, and enjoy, enjoy, enjoy!'

Campbell did look, and the scene did indeed entrance him. He had an eye which had fed on the world's most famous prospects; and to him this seemed to be as fair as any.

'Alic,' said Vernon, 'here is the land of rapture! Feast your eyes on the trees and seas and mountains—hazy mist on the mountains, blue on the sea like lapis-lazuli, azure skies pierced by the Alpine snowflake!

Age cannot wither them, nor custom stale
Their infinite variety.'

Campbell again smiled, and Vernon went on buoyantly. 'Yes,' he said, 'I knew you would feel as I do. I knew that by-and-by you would come to yourself, as I have done. And now you are going to stay here, and your cure will be quite completed. There's a delightful bedroom awaiting you, which is called your room already, with a carved chest of drawers in it, and a marvellous zinc shower-bath; and here we will live like a couple of true philosophers. We have both of us seen much since our old college days; we have known the dangers of the great deep, both of us; and now we will look into life more clearly than we have done; but life, no more than it used to be, shall be any personal oppression to us. We will only enter, here, on a new phase of youth. We will have free cloudless days, and nights of moonlight; we will drive, and ride, and sail; we will explore the whole country. We will know the folds of the hills, grey with olive-trees; we will listen to the sound of mule-bells; we will see how the middle-age lingers in the wild hill villages. And we will talk, too, Alic; we will ease our souls with talking. Poetry, religion, and philosophy—we will talk of all—yes, and of love too, if you wish it—we will talk of that even more continually. What! do you look grave, and did I hear you sigh just now? Upon my word, it was an actual sigh you gave! Well—never mind that; after all, it is only natural. You have had a bad disease, and one that is never cured in a moment. Little qualms of the sickness will long keep returning to one. I can quite feel for you; I know you are losing

much ; but what I ask you to do is to think of the bright side of the matter. Ah, that excellent letter of mine—it would have done you all the good in the world, if it had only got to you !’

‘My dear fellow,’ said Campbell very slowly, ‘God knows I should like to stay with you ; but it is not to be.’ And he fixed his eyes upon Vernon with a wistful serious tenderness—it might almost be called solemnity.

The tone, the look, showed that the speaker was resolute. Vernon was startled, annoyed, disappointed.

‘Not stay with me !’ he exclaimed. ‘Why, what on earth can you mean, Alic ?’ He put the question with an air of complete bewilderment. ‘You will be far better here than moping elsewhere by yourself. Tell me, tell me, why cannot you stay with me ?’

When Campbell answered, his voice had almost sunk to a whisper. ‘Because,’ he said, ‘I have to go on to San Remo. I have to be there this evening. Vernon—my—my friend is there. This is the reason why I have come abroad. I may see her to-night—I think I shall, at farthest, see her to-morrow morning ; and at one time or the other I shall receive my life or death at her hands.’

‘*Her—her !*’ cried Vernon. ‘You don’t mean to say you still—why, good gracious me ! I thought you had given all that up. Is it really true, then, that I have taken your letter wrongly ; and that when you told me your case was, after all, not hopeless, you only meant you might still get the gift of your heart accepted, not that you were growing content at having had it sent you back for your own again ?’

Campbell looked at Vernon with a singular soft smile, which seemed to express at once affection and a sad amusement.

‘You’re a curious creature, Vernon,’ he said at last. ‘You know something of the world ; at least, you have seen many men and women ; and do you think that a man who has really loved a woman can cast his love to the winds in the course of a single fortnight ? Can you seriously conceive such a thing possible ? What a strange notion you must have of the nature of human affection !’

Vernon, who had not only conceived such a thing quite possible, but who had in this case actually taken it for granted, received a sudden check from these grave words of his friend. He was not embarrassed by what he had said himself—he knew Campbell far too well for that ; but he felt that in Campbell’s eye he had betrayed a singular ignorance ; and the first thing that struck him was the absurdity of his own situation. A look came into

his eyes that fully confessed his fault; but it was a twinkle of humour rather than a tear of contrition; and his expression was not unlike that of a naughty child's, who has been caught for the fifth time committing some minor mischief. Campbell understood the expression well; and instead of chilling him, it seemed to open his heart the more.

'Ah,' he said, 'you will never understand me; and yet you are the easiest man I ever knew to confide in. Vernon'—and here his voice sank low again—'this love of mine has lain down with me and risen up with me for a whole year. I have become a new man since first it took possession of me.'

'So it seems,' said Vernon, 'and a very much unhappier one.'

'That depends,' said Campbell. 'It may be so, and it may not. Vernon,' he added presently, after some moments' silence, 'I think all this trouble has been bringing me nearer God.'

His clear eyes as he spoke were raised upwards, like a saint's in meditation. Vernon looked at him with a frank and admiring wonder; and he now began to realise that Campbell was in truth changed. Was this the Campbell who but a single twelvemonth back took a ruthless pleasure in broad Rabelaisian humour, and used God's name rarely save when it gave point to an epigram? Vernon saw the change, for he had keen moral perceptions; and in a certain way he respected it; but he still did not despair of amending his friend's purpose. He repeated all the arguments he had before used in his letter, and they flowed from his lips with increased fervour and fancy. 'Marriage,' he urged, 'is the grave of youth. Why would you bury it so long before its time? Are the eyes of youth nothing to you, with their far vision and laughter? Are its free limbs nothing, and the restless plumes on its shoulders? It has the strength, the desire, and the freedom of the sea-gull or of the sky-lark. It knows, like them, the blue of the sea and sky, and the whiteness of the clouds and of the foam-crests. But once marry, and what will happen then? The soaring sky-lark turns to a barn-door fowl. Tell me, Alic, in sober honest truth, would you ever, if you were married, care for your pictures as you once did? Would you ever care to travel? Would you ever care to revisit Italy?'

'I should care for it all,' said Campbell; 'a hundred, oh, a thousand times better.'

'Would you? You think so now; but I know from experience that the dream is not like the reality. Your wife's kisses would come between you and your pictures; your wife's maid and boxes would come between you and your travelling.'

'No, no,' said Campbell. 'If she liked my pictures, I should

only see a new meaning in them; and as for maids and boxes, we should be quite poor, Vernon; so I don't think they would trouble us. She has simple tastes, my friend has—she's like me there.'

'I don't know,' said Vernon, 'what you may mean by simplicity; but I know this much from what you have often told me—you are a rich bachelor; you would be a poor husband. I have seen myself that you have always lived in luxury; and you have always travelled whenever the fancy seized you. Marriage would therefore mean to you, on your own showing, the complete loss of all your personal liberty. You would be fettered in every movement and almost in every thought of your life.'

'I should have to give up nothing,' said Campbell, 'that I would not give up gladly. I could find my pearl of price in a very small field; and so might you, if you knew what affection was. But that is a thing which it seems you never *have* known.'

'You wouldn't say that,' replied Vernon, 'if you had seen me last night. I was driving under the star-light for three enchanted hours with one of the loveliest girls I ever in my life set eyes upon. To look at her face was to study a romance and a mystery. Not a tone, not a look, was lost on me, not a movement of throat or breast as she caught breath or sighed.' He then gave a brief account of his acquaintance with Miss Walters, and concluded by asking if it was not an ideal adventure.

'Adventure!' said Campbell. 'Yes, the word is an excellent one. But does a man, when he falls truly in love, consider the event an adventure? Was it an *adventure* for the Dolorous Mother to see her Son die on Calvary?'

Campbell's voice as he spoke was quivering. Vernon at last detected his high-strung state of feeling; he laid his hand for a moment kindly on Campbell's shoulder, and in a tone of compassion that was trying to rise to sympathy, 'My dear, dear fellow,' he said, 'whatever you wish for yourself, I wish. I hope to God you will be successful in—well, I must not say your adventure.'

'Thank you,' said Campbell, smiling. 'But as the time draws near, my hopes get very shadowy. I feel, in going on to San Remo, as if I were on my way to my own execution.'

'Then give yourself a short reprieve,' Vernon again began urging him. 'Recruit your courage with me here for a day or two, and you shall see if my heroine is not all I have said she is—a Cumæan Sibyl, a dainty young lady of fashion, and a Beatrice Cenci in one.'

Campbell shook his head sadly. 'You don't understand me,' he said. 'You forget that now I am leading a consecrated life. Ah Vernon,' he added, 'what a thoroughly immoral man you are!'

‘Immoral!’

‘Yes, profoundly immoral; haven’t I often told you so? It is not that you have been led downwards by your lower nature, but that you have never been led anywhere by your higher. The worst sin you can commit is to play as you do with the higher affections. That is the surest means by which a man quenches the Spirit.’

‘I assure you,’ said Vernon, ‘you quite misjudge me here; I have known what attachment is as well as you have. But my own experience, and yours too, teaches me that it is able to blight a life quite as easily as to bless it.’

‘My life,’ said Campbell, sighing, ‘may be only too probably blighted by it. As I tell you, I have but slender hopes. I build only on some slight expression which my friend let drop about me to a third person; and it is more than possible that I may have quite deceived myself; and that I may by this time to-morrow be the forlornest creature imaginable.’

‘And in that case,’ said Vernon, ‘what shall you do then?’

Campbell’s look altered, and his face grew resolute. ‘In that case,’ he said, ‘I shall go off straight to Vienna, and find distraction in a free course of sensuality. For a life of pleasure, I am told, Vienna is the best of capitals.’

‘Nonsense,’ said Vernon sharply. ‘You would do nothing of the kind.’

‘I should,’ replied Campbell; ‘I was never in my life more serious. I have settled already the exact route I should travel by, and the hotel I should first put up at.’

‘I never cared enough for any woman,’ said Vernon, ‘to make me go two steps to the Devil for her. Or even if I did so for the sake of getting her, I certainly should not do so for the sake of getting away from her.’

‘It is not,’ said Campbell, ‘to get away from *her*; it is to get away from the bitter sense of the loss of her.’

‘My dear Campbell,’ said Vernon, ‘you don’t know what you are talking about. A moment ago I had begun to admire and to envy you; and now you have spoilt all. Because some woman, it chances, does not love you, is that any reason why you should cease to respect yourself? Affection, you say, raises the soul to God; and for aught I know it may very possibly do so. But if you are crossed in love, does that make God valueless? Are your views about God dependent on a girl’s views about you? If your passion really raises you, it cannot let you plan debasing yourself. If in cold blood you can thus plan debasing yourself, then all I can say is, that I don’t think much of your passion.’

'You would not be so hard, Vernon,' said Campbell meekly, 'if you had ever felt as I feel. What a lover plans is never in cold blood.' He drew his watch from his pocket, and with a start rose from his seat. 'I must be off,' he said. 'Don't try to keep me. I shall reach San Remo at five; and then—then, Heaven for me, or Vienna.'

'Nonsense!' said Vernon, speaking this time with affection and not with hardness; and then with a sudden laugh, 'If you don't look out,' he added, 'I shall write and tell your friend about this. I believe, Alic, I know what has demoralised you. You always maintained that Dante was a great moral teacher; and you think he went to Hell because Beatrice would not flirt with him.' Despite of his dejection, this made Campbell laugh. 'And now,' said Vernon, 'here is one thing you must promise me. Either to-night or to-morrow, you say, you will have received some answer. And if the answer is such that you still mean to go to the Devil, the first devil you come to must be me, and your first Inferno must be my villa. Will you promise me that?'

'Yes,' said Campbell, 'I will promise you that gladly. But if I am driven back to you, you will find me a poor companion. I shall be a miserable crippled object, with my spirits smashed and dislocated.'

'Never mind that,' said Vernon; 'I shall prepare for the worst. I shall look on my villa, not as a hell, but as a hospital. The bed shall be ready to-night for the patient with the broken heart; and the choicest drugs from the cellar shall be brought out to dose him with. Only, you must mind, if I do all this for you, not to call me immoral again.'

'At all events,' said Campbell, 'you have returned my accusation with interest.'

'Yes,' said his friend gaily, 'I am an excellent hand at that. If life were only like politics, and I were only like what you think I am, I should have all that is needed for a really great career. In politics at least there is nothing like want of principle. It is the one great quality whose use is doubled by inverting it. It is the best thing to possess yourself, and the best thing to impute to your enemies.'

Campbell had meanwhile remounted the battered vehicle which had brought him from the neighbouring station; and Vernon was left presently alone with his own reflections.

(To be continued.)





Sybil.



BELGRAVIA ANNUAL.

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Sybil.

A CROSS the meadows gliding,
Where birds, in covert hiding,
From hedge and grass, to see her pass, ope myriad tiny eyes,
As if her gracious presence
Brought back to all the pleasure
The vanished spring, low-carolling, goes Sybil careless-wise.

What in her soul is hidden
That brings the smile unbidden
To ripe red lips, as on she trips,—what fills her far-off gaze?
Do childhood's memories thicken
In heart, or pulses quicken
With maiden dream of what may beam through life in future
days?

Those eyes see strangest fancies,—
Of shy and downbent glances,
Of passionate word, half-felt, half-heard, of sudden raptured kiss;
Of that world-old sweet story
That still makes life's chief glory:—
Oh, rightly-named! all unashamed pass on to find thy bliss!

Sybil, may thy divining
Reveal but splendour shining
Through all thy days, e'en though the rays should gleam on
swift-shed tears!
Ah! wouldst thou but discover
That I, thine unknown lover,
As happy mate in book of fate were named, through all thy
years!

The Young Lady in Grep.

I WAS recommended change. It had been impressed upon my father, a member of the French senate, and my mother, and all the relatives anxious in me and for me, that only perfect change would do me any good. I was in a low way and wanted rousing. I was in a bad way, and fresh air and foreign scene and character might bring about a better state of mind, if I were willing to help myself, they hoped. It was as if they doubted that from the outset; it was as if I doubted it myself, knowing what help I wanted, and how useless any efforts of my own would assuredly be.

Yes, I was in a bad way—even for a young Frenchman. I had reflected too much, they told me—I had studied too hard—I had become too philosophical and argumentative. I was versed in all the theories of the French and German ‘schools;’ I had analysed all beliefs, and yet believed in very little. They said at home that I was reading myself to death.

They were partly right and partly wrong. I had lost energy and strength of late; I had become morbid and misanthropical; and I let them send me abroad, stipulating for only one condition, that I should be allowed to go alone. I was an only son, and accustomed to my own company. I was conceited enough to think that there was nothing like it, having a fair opinion of myself, and implicit credence in my own wild speculations. My one ambition was to be the founder of a new sect; but friends held aloof very wisely, and thought that I was going mad.

It is possible that I was not very wise, and that people saw a change in me; they called me a clever fellow, but they were not anxious for my company. I was too deep for them, and I knew too much, they said, of everything but—men and women and the world! If this were satire, it was true enough. My world had been all books and all philosophies, and I cared for little else. Men I doubted, women I thought childish and vain, and the world I knew was selfish to its back-bone.

Still, I would go abroad. They were anxious about it at home, where I had no wish to stay; I was killing myself by over-study, and I had no particular desire to die, though life seemed a dull and commonplace affair to me.

I chose England for a resting-place. They were curious folk

in England, I had heard, and there I might be fortunate enough to meet a kindred spirit, a somebody to understand me, and sympathise with all my aspirations, my schemes for the general good of a community which in the aggregate I despised already.

I found no one of my tastes and feelings: I was an enthusiast, and English folk were afraid of me. I raved and gesticulated too much for them in my heat of argument, and they were glad to get away. In this English country, I had felt better for a while; but the deep, deadly sense of an indifference to mankind came to me again, born of my experience of shallow men, and I passed from London to the sea-side—making towards my native France again, after months of a change which had done me little good. This was the first step towards a new life—to the romance and mystery floating beyond the world of science and sober fact in which I had been submerged. As the poets say, my time had come at last—my fate had stepped across the border-land towards me. And fate was a woman, of course!

This fate, then—a dark-haired, dark-eyed lady of above the middle height, a young lady in grey, whose years had not numbered a score, and who was so strangely beautiful that people gazed at her, as at a picture by some master-hand, crossed my path, entered the same railway-carriage with me, glanced critically but not boldly at the faces of her fellow-passengers, and then looked steadily from the window until the train was moving from the station.

Hers was a face which attracted me at once, although until that hour I had been a woman-hater. It was hardly its beauty—say rather, the strangeness of its beauty and the depth of its expression. There was great intelligence, I was sure, behind those well-drawn features—there was a deep sadness even, endeavouring to disguise itself by a set immobility—there were trouble and anxiety, but there was also the courage to resist. I thought all this, as I watched my fellow-traveller; and I sketched a story from her face very far from the truth—as was natural, deep thinker though I was.

She did not seem to notice those who travelled with her again; to the end of her journey she read numerous letters, which she drew from a small valise resting on her lap, letters which were in various handwritings, and bore always foreign post-marks. Once or twice during the perusal of these epistles, I observed that she smiled—smiled brightly and hopefully—and the light upon her face then was very fair to see. That she attracted me strangely, I have said; and that it was not for her beauty, I was assured. One of my facts or fallacies, in which the world would not believe, was that there

were men or women, or both, born to meet each other at a predestined period of life, who were for ever steadily approaching to one fixed point, and were all their lives directly or indirectly influencing each other by strange subtle means, of which philosophy knew nothing, and cared less. And this might be the life that had been waiting for me, and was already influencing my own. I did not think so at the time, although impressed by the sad, thoughtful face—by the story in it, and marvelling already why she travelled alone, and what her mission on this weary earth might be.

I scarcely thought so at the hotel at Folkestone, where we met again, although I was struck by the coincidence which took her there, and which sat her by my side at the *table d'hôte*, where she ate little, and thought deeply, and seemed unconscious of the admiring, curious, thoughtful glances bestowed freely upon her by the guests. It struck me even that she was scarcely a stranger there, and that people seemed to recognise her; once the manager of the hotel came and spoke to her, and bowed obsequiously to certain orders which she gave to him in a low voice. She wore at dinner the same dark grey dress with which she had travelled with me from London, and her hands, which were now ungloved, were totally destitute of rings. No one spoke to her, and she spoke to no one; but she was not embarrassed by the isolation of her position—on the contrary, looked steadily and almost critically about her at times, as if expectant of a friend.

I did not address her, on my own part, albeit strangely tempted once or twice. I was preternaturally reserved by the habits of my youth, and there was a doubt in my mind whether she might not take it as an offence, and resent it. I did not believe she had recognised me as her travelling companion, and I thought she was English and more reserved than I even. Before the *table d'hôte* was quite finished she rose and walked gracefully the full length of the dining-room, looking at the guests, as she passed on, as if half-expectant still of the friend amongst them somewhere, but betraying no emotion or embarrassment at the attention which she received in return. As she passed from the room, a short, stout man, who had sat on the other side of her, and who was to me the very personification of vulgarity, with his greasy face and coarse, broad smile, leaned across the chair left vacant between us by her departure, and said in a loud voice:

‘The lady in grey is back again, after all. I took odds on the event last month.’

I did not respond at first; then a new curiosity led me to ask questions of this familiar being.

‘Is she often here?’ I asked.

'Oh! yes, very often,' he replied; 'winter, as well as summer, I run against her. Always the same stand-offish style. I can't bear stuck-up people. And always in that grey dress, or in a dress of the same colour,—hanged if I know which.'

'Is there anything remarkable in her being here? You are here very often yourself, I presume?'

'Yes, I travel for Toats' firm, you know; Toats and Twirl of Cannon Street; and so I'm always going backwards and forwards between London and Paris, and I see a good deal of Miss Grey, as I call her; I've heard her other name, but dashed if I can call it to mind, and the more I see of her, the less I make her out. She's just as much on the other side of the Channel, always at the Grand Hotel, Boulogne, and always nothing to do but dawdle about the place reading lots of letters. I've seen her sit for hours on the beach outside, too, staring at the sea like a woman melancholy mad; you will see her yourself to-morrow. She's an odd one, I can tell you; quite a mystery here.'

'Indeed!' I said, growing tired of my friend's loquacity, which was not to be readily suppressed now.

'You're in the wine trade, ain't you?' he said suddenly 'haven't I met you?'

'I am not in the wine trade, or in any trade.'

'Oh! I see, a regular gent, taking it easy. Well, there nothing like it, if the coin will hold out. French, of course?'

'Yes, I am a Frenchman.'

'Going across to-morrow—or going to make a stay here? I go across to-morrow,' he added, by way of an extra inducement for me to continue my journey. That last remark decided my course of action.

'I shall remain here a few days,' I replied.

'If you make it a few weeks, I shall be back again. My name's Saunders.'

I did not reciprocate his confidence; I was tired of the man's obtrusiveness, and anxious to get away from him. I did not think that he would trouble me presently, and be one of the links of a chain that was being forged already for me. I only knew that here was a specimen of the English bagman highly developed, and that every word he said jarred upon me unpleasantly. I got up to withdraw; the dinner was over, and I cared not to linger over bad wine and an indifferent dessert.

'I'll give you one tip before you go,' he said, touching my arm and grinning at me; 'don't try it on with the lady in grey. She don't care to speak to anybody, and she can shut you up with half a look. By George, it is a scorcher of a look, pretty as she is! I

shan't forget her in a hurry—I wouldn't have sat here, if I had known she was coming this evening. If you're going to have a cigar anywhere, Bill Saunders is your man, you know.'

'Thank you—I shall be engaged this evening.'

'Oh! no offence—just as you like,—I'm never hard up for a pal.'

I thought this was the end of Mr. Saunders, and that he was not likely to cross my path again. I had not met a man before whom I had so quickly disliked as he. This was the Englishman of the farce—more like the beings my countrymen depicted than any I had encountered yet.

I went out to the high road, and the parade upon the sea, walking past the few holiday folk left, and the band that was braying for their amusement, walking on as far as Sandgate and descending the cliffs to the lower road, where I found that there was a return route nearer to the sea. The evenings were drawing in at that period. It was the middle of October, when the night falls early and the breeze from the sea is keen and cold after sundown. I walked back towards my hotel at a rapid rate; half-way towards Folkestone I came upon the lady in grey walking as rapidly in the opposite direction. I was sure it was she, there was a grace and manner distinctive enough to betray her even in the darkness.

To my surprise, she advanced towards me, and I stopped and raised my hat. She did not recognise me, it seemed.

'Can you tell me how far it is to Hythe, sir, by this road?' she inquired in haste.

'No, madam, I am a stranger here.'

'I think it is near Sandgate, but I am not sure. Thank you,' she said; then she passed me and went on swiftly again into the shadows, where she was lost.

I was bewildered—the lady in grey had a mission to fulfil, and there was a mystery in it and her isolated life. It was not my business to interfere with it, and it was wholly unlike me to become impressed so quickly by other people's movements, but I was interested in her—ay, and drawn towards her!

I saw no more of her the following day; she was not at the *table d'hôte* in the evening, as I had expected.

Old patrons of this hotel, men and women who were for ever in its precincts, spoke of her to my surprise at the dinner-table with a freedom which I—perfect stranger to her though I was—felt disposed to answer.

'Miss Grey is on the wing again,' a red-faced, white moustached man said, with a short laugh.

'Quite a romance, this flitting,' answered the lady to whom he spoke, 'I should be glad to know her history.'

'You may depend upon it you never will,' answered the first speaker.

'She is very young, and so very quiet too, or I should have thought——' and then the lady stopped, not knowing what she thought, or not caring to confess it.

'I declare I would not come here at all, or bring my innocent daughters here, if Monsieur De Lorme' (this was the proprietor of the hotel) 'had not assured me that she came to him with the highest credentials from abroad.'

'Ah! these Frenchmen will say anything.'

'I can't help thinking she's an actress.'

'Or an adventuress,' said another voice—another lady's voice too, 'or worse. I have no confidence in ladies with a mystery; the mystery is always worthless and discreditable.'

'Not always, but very often certainly,' said one more charitably disposed.

She was at the hotel the following day, and I seemed waiting for her. I knew that she had arrived late last night: a chance inquiry of an inquisitive visitor at the breakfast-table had given me the news. I saw her in the morning reading on the beach, sitting apart from the few visitors who were there, and deeply interested in her book. I do not believe she looked up from her volume once, even to regard the sea, foaming and lashing against the shingle furiously that day. I sat at a distance watching this mysterious lady, and hardly conscious I was watching her.

At the dinner-table we were together once more. Strangely enough, I had chosen the seat next her again. As she came down the room, I felt my heart beating faster than its wont, lest she should pass the chair vacant on my left. For a moment she paused, and even hesitated, then took the seat and looked for an instant at me.

Before I could remember the commercial traveller's story of her austere reserve, or think even of my own, by an impulse for which I could hardly account, save that it was natural to be courteous to one whose face had grown familiar as a guest's, I bowed low and murmured a good evening.

She returned my salutation promptly, and with a faint smile. There was no vexation at being addressed, as I had almost anticipated and feared from the traveller's legend of two nights ago.

'Good evening,' she replied.

She seemed less thoughtful and more observant—numbers had thinned at the hotel; the old gentleman with the white moustache had gone to London; Saunders, of the firm of Toats and Twirl, had not returned from Paris; one or two new faces, pale with

the voyage across, were at the dinner-table; several of the old were missing.

I was wondering if I dared speak to her again, when she addressed me so suddenly that I started and coloured.

'Do you intend a long stay here?' she inquired.

'I—I hardly know, madam. I am not pressed for time.'

'It is not a place where much amusement is to be found at this time of the year—the nights are long and the air is cold.'

'I am travelling for my health, unfortunately—not for amusement.'

'Indeed!' she said, with some interest in her tone of voice, 'I should not have thought you were an invalid.'

'I dispute the assertion myself at home—but there are friends in France who will not take my word.'

'You are French?'

'Oh, yes.'

'You speak English excellently—it's only your appearance which is French.'

I hardly admired this remark—it might be taken either way, and yet it was scarcely likely that this young girl would attempt to satirise me thus early in our acquaintance. For we *had* become acquainted; it was all very strange—I could see some wandering looks across the table at us—but it was a pleasant thought to me. She was particularly observant, for suddenly a little musical laugh escaped her, and she said in a lower tone,—

'Our good friends opposite are taking it for granted that we have met before. It is so seldom that I care to speak to anyone at this place—certainly not to any Englishman.'

'You are French, then, also?'

'My father is French, my mother was an Englishwoman.'

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask her where her father was living, and why she was always travelling alone; in my eager curiosity, the question had nearly escaped me. But I was silent, and to my great surprise she appeared to reply to my thoughts, as though it had been easy to read them for herself.

'A father very much engaged, compels me to rely upon my own resources a great deal, and I am fond of travelling about and studying human nature. It is my profession, in fact.'

'You write?'

'A little—for a living. And you,' she added, regarding me very steadily, 'unless I am greatly mistaken, are one of the grand army of letters also?'

'No, madam—I do not write.'

'Ah! you are modest, and conceal the truth,' she said, smiling.

'I am only a dreamer, they tell me at home,' I answered, 'and I have come to England to dream on. I have no wish to join the *litterati*—even if I had the ability to turn my pen to profit—I am neither novelist, dramatist, nor poet.'

'Nor poet,' she repeated to herself.

'Only a dreamer, madam. I had a hope one day to say philosopher, but that is dying out.'

'As fast as other dreams—ah! they soon fade,' she murmured.

She did not say any more; it seemed almost as if she had turned from me, disappointed that her estimate of me had been incorrect. I was only one of the crowd that she had taken so much pains to avoid, and there was no sympathy between us. This was a clever woman, and I was a weak fool. I had said too much, and let her see how shallow I was, and she did not care for my boy's philosophy.

I made no further effort to engage her in conversation; my pride told me she was tired of me, and I was very quickly silent. It was only after she had withdrawn that I felt I had lost an advantage in her eyes, and that I might have said something to prove at least that I had thought a great deal. I noticed that I was regarded with some suspicion by the guests, and I knew afterwards that it was the first time the young lady in grey had been seen to converse at length with any of the visitors at the hotel. I was the favoured one—or the old friend lurking about in disguise, and for some hidden purpose which they hoped to fathom presently.

The next day I had made up my mind to cross the Channel and proceed homewards, but my plans were all upset by last night's conversation. I was a man under a spell—here was the unseen, incomprehensible motive-force in which I believed, and which was drawing me towards this mystery, and making the young French-woman a part of my waking life. The dreams had vanished, and she was here in the foreground to ensnare or counsel me—to exercise a supernatural power over me, if she were vain and fond of power. I did not own—I could not think at this time—that it was simply love for her which was affecting me. I had no belief in the love of man for woman—I would more readily place credence in my theory of mysterious attraction, which was but a heart's deep passion under another name. I was a weakling boasting of my strength, but I was close upon my knowledge of the truth, and it would soon dismay me. I did not know what havoc love could make in a man naturally weak, and naturally anxious to be trusted.

We became friends, Virginie and I, The ice once broken

between two reserved natures, each alone in a strange country, and each not one-and-twenty, and there was no freezing again of her demeanour towards me. If she did not look up to me, she respected me at least, and the smile with which she met me of a morning, her readiness to converse, to speak of her family and mine, to let me by degrees learn something of her and tell her not a little of myself, were ties to draw me closer every day. I knew that I loved her then despite the mystery which still surrounded her, despite the assurance to my heart that she was not telling me her whole history, and that there would be more to learn some day. I could not expect implicit confidence from her, and yet she had had entire confidence from me. I felt that I could trust her, I was only secretly pained that she could not put her faith in me.

Presently she knew all my life, my ambitions, my wild theories, out of many of which she reasoned me with keen incisive arguments, that proved how much stronger and brighter this mind was than my own; she was my junior by eighteen months, but I was like a child in the hands of its mother, when she took me to task and railed at my speculations.

‘You are very weak, Armand,’ she said to me one day, and with so pitying a look in her eyes that I winced under it. ‘I could wish, for your sake, that you were a stronger-minded man.’

‘You think I am easily led away, then?’

‘I hardly know what to think of you,’ she said sadly, ‘or what——’

‘Well?’ I asked, as she paused.

‘Or what will become of you,’ she added.

‘Without you—’ I said impulsively; ‘ah! I don’t know now!’

She coloured. She had not been prepared for so hasty an outburst of my feelings—I was not prepared myself. The very misery of my tone of voice perhaps convinced her, for the first time, of the deep love I had for her. She was surprised, and for a moment abashed—she knew my secret now, and was too wise to seem wholly to misinterpret it. She was above so womanly an affectation.

We were sitting at the pier-head together, waiting for the Channel boat’s arrival. It was wintry weather, and no one was abroad that day but ourselves. The wind was coming fiercely across the sea, and the clouds were threatening rain. The holiday visitors had all flown homewards, and there was only life and bustle in the little harbour beyond, and two strange hearts trying perhaps to understand each other here, and one failing very miserably.

‘You will be soon going home for good,’ she said, after an

awkward silence; 'I fancy even that your friends are growing anxious.'

'What makes you think this?' I asked quickly.

'Letters come more frequently to you, and you are sad after their perusal.'

'Just as if I did not care to return to the home to which I am summoned!' I added, with a forced laugh.

'And that is true too?'

'Yes—quite true,' I answered, 'and you know it.'

She regarded me very steadily now, and looked no longer away. The crisis had come, and she was prepared for it.

'Because you leave me here, and after a fashion,' she shivered, as with the northern blast, 'we have become friends.'

'Oh! you speak bitterly,' I cried, 'but God knows you are a friend that is very dear to me. To lose you is to submerge my whole life, which I would rather part with than say good-bye.'

'Why! this is the raving of a man on the stage, Armand,' she said warmly, 'and I will beg of you to cease.'

'Oh! I know you don't care for me—that I am never likely to be more in your estimation than a madman and a misanthrope—that we are not even suited to each other, but,' I added, 'I can't help loving you, or saying so, any more than I can help breathing. It is the plain truth, and you may as well know it, Virginie.'

She looked at me with the same steady, pitying look.

'I am very sorry to hear it.'

'And it is no news to you,' I added.

'I may have feared that this was to be the end of a friendship born in hours of idleness together, and I would have stopped it, if I could, weeks ago. But a woman is powerless.'

'Not always.'

'I have been waiting for you to speak,' she added frankly, 'and for me to end this folly. I am glad it has come thus early, for both our sakes—you will forget me, possibly hate me, all the sooner.'

I saw the tears in her eyes before she dashed them away with a quick hand.

'Virginie!—hate you!'

'Love repulsed turns quickly to hate, it is said—and it will be natural on your part, if not now—presently.'

'Impossible.'

'I don't know,' she answered very thoughtfully; 'your self-love is wounded when I tell you it is hopeless that I can think of you as one dear to me in any way—or as one even with whom I shall be sorry to part.'

‘Ah! don’t say that. Spare me a little.’

‘Not sorry, because I am sure it is for the best. What would your father say to such a *mésalliance* as you have had in your thoughts?—what would he, a French officer and gentleman, think of it, a power in the senate, a minister of the state? Have you not told me more than once how proud he is—and is there not that about my life which is not to be explained?’

She spoke fearlessly now, but she was startled by my answer. Prepared for many eccentricities on my part, she was not prepared for this.

‘My father is proud—but he loves his son,’ I said. ‘Here is his answer to your question.’

‘His answer!’ she cried, in her amazement.

‘I have no secrets from him. I wrote and told him all that was in my heart,’ I said. ‘I spoke of my love for you, and of the one chance of peace and happiness which it afforded me.’

‘This was unwise, before you knew, or thought——’

‘Read his letter, Virginia, and see what he says for himself and—for me.’

I put my father’s letter in her hands, which trembled very much as she received it—the face was of a new pallor also, and the fresh young lips were compressed as with a grief or pain. Her emotion gave me a new hope, and my heart bounded at once from the depth of its despair.

I watched her read the letter—I had a strong faith in its contents impressing her. It was the epistle of a loving father to an only son—of a man who was very anxious for his son’s welfare, and had been for years terribly solicitous concerning him.

‘I shall be only too happy to see you united to a lady well-educated, well-born, and amiable,’ he wrote. ‘I can know of no bar to such an union, and I have not a word to urge against it. Strange as you are, Armand, I think I can trust your judgment in this matter, and I believe you are not the man to have set your affection on this lady hastily and without full reflection. More, I believe in her, as you do yourself. You give me no particulars of her family—ask her, should she favour your suit in due course of time, to put me in communication with her parents, and let us all meet together with full and happy hearts.’

There was more than this—news of home and of old friends, but the epistle returned to my love for Virginia again.

‘Bring her to us at Dieppe, where we have gone for a holiday—she will be welcome,’ were his last words. Virginia read the letter carefully, and by degrees was firm and calm again.

‘Yes, this is a trusting father,’ she murmured, ‘and I have

always thought him cruel and exacting—one,' she added quickly, 'who by his austerity and want of sympathy with you had driven you from home. See how easy it is to judge, and judge falsely.'

'You thought this of my father! Virginie!'

'Yes. You were a man so ill-trained and wild,' she answered, 'that your youth had been uncared for, or cared for too much, I felt assured. But what would *he* think of me? You have not told him that I am alone here, to many an object of suspicion, and to many more incomprehensible. I am a woman alone—and there is always a doubt over such an anomaly, and the world has a right to be wary of her.'

She spoke indignantly, and beat the letter I had given her on the palm of her gloved hand.

'But you can defy the world—there is no mystery which you cannot clear—there is——'

'There is nothing but resignation to my position,' said Virginie. 'I cannot defy the world, and it is beyond my power to explain.'

'I ask for no explanation—I will be content with you,' I cried. 'Give me only a hope to win you, and I shall care for nothing else.'

'That is romance, and we are in a prosaic world, Armand. Still,' she added, after a pause, 'I thank you for all your faith in me; it is far more than I deserve.'

'And you will——'

'I will think again,' she added, with the old puzzled, pitying look returning to her face. 'Give me four days to consider everything; leave me this letter to offer me some strength, even—your father's words of faith in the woman his son loves—and meet me here four days hence, in the Christmas week approaching. Will you?'

'Will I!' I cried. 'Oh! with what hope and with what prayers will I wait! And meanwhile——'

'Meanwhile, leave me to myself—don't watch me,' she added, with a new and terrified look, 'for I am afraid of you, and of my own strength, and am desperately unhappy. I may remain here, I may disappear; but do not say a word to me again, until we meet in this place. Promise!'

I promised her, and she rose, and in an impatient, agitated way waved me from her. The ordeal of my silence had commenced; the beginning of many hopes and bright visions from a roseate cloudland had set in, to be followed by hours of deep regrets and unavailing doubts.

It was the traveller Saunders who turned my secret joys and hopes to a grief bitter and inconsolable. He had been away some months in lieu of weeks, and was full of spirits at the result of his

travels and the commissions he had obtained. In his horrible frankness he told me what he had earned, what business he had transacted, and how immensely he had been admired abroad by everybody—male and female, he added, with a wink.

‘And that reminds me of the grey lady—you remember the grey lady who was here when you came down?’

‘Yes—I remember.’

‘I met her in Paris, yesterday—and of all places in the world, guess where?’

‘I am not handy at guessing,’ I said, with a sickening feeling at my heart; ‘I do not care to guess.’

‘At the Bal-masqué at the Opera, then—half-a-dozen swells with her, and she the biggest swell of all. No more of your grey suits and simpering smiles—oh! trust her.’

‘Are you sure of this? This must be a lie, for certain.’

‘Hallo! draw it mild, old fellow, please,’ he cried.

‘She was at a masquerade?’

‘I’ll swear to her: when she took her mask off, there wasn’t a doubt about it. Why, I never saw another face like hers.’

‘Nor I,’ was my hoarse reply; ‘and what became of her?’

‘Oh! I didn’t run after her, you may be certain. It was just for a moment, and then poof—gone!’

‘You may have been deceived.’

‘I was never deceived in my life,’ was the boastful reply; ‘I am a thundering sight too ’cute for that.’

It seemed impossible that I could place credence in this, but it impressed me. She had disappeared from the hotel—the waiter, whom I bribed into my confidence, told me she had left for France by the mail-boat on the very day she had implored my silence. It was so like the truth, and yet so like a base invention. I stole away from the hotel—I was afraid of the man Saunders, and all that he might tell me presently—I was haunted, and more miserable than ever. When the four days had expired, I returned to Folkestone in the cold, boisterous Christmas week, and took up my place at the little lighthouse where I had parted from her last. I believed she would return. In all my agonising doubts of her, I did not doubt her word. And after that, the accusation—and the last farewell. The woman triumphant, perhaps, but the man no longer the dupe of his implicit trust in her.

I was before my time; and before its time also, hurled over by a fierce wind and tide in its favour, came the Channel boat. It swept in storm-tossed and panting, and I looked down upon its drenched deck from the pier-head as if in search of her, and as if assured she would be there.

And I was not mistaken. It was she, paler and more beautiful even, whose face looked at me from beneath the hood, and did not smile a recognition. By her side, and with her two hands linked upon his arm, was a tall grey-haired man of some fifty years—for the first time in her life, she was not a woman alone to me.

I shrank back—I could have stolen away for good—for ever from her. This was the meeting, then, and this her answer!

I stood by the lighthouse still. There came a second thought to me, that this could not be the end of all, that she would approach, and offer some words of explanation, perhaps of comfort to me. In my own wild theory, I had faith enough yet to believe that she would come to me.

And she came. With her hood thrown back, and tears brimming in her eyes, she advanced, both hands extended to me. The tall man by whom she was accompanied stood, like a sentinel, in the background, some fifty paces away, as though he respected us, and would leave us to ourselves.

‘Virginie!’ I cried, ‘you have returned—you have come back to me!’

I had forgotten everything at the sight of her, at the contact of her hands with mine. I remembered only that I loved her desperately.

‘Armand, I have come to ask your forgiveness, if you will grant it to me—as I pray you will.’

‘What does it mean?’

‘That I have deceived you, in my own selfish interests, very cruelly; and that I have only your hate to look to.’

‘That man—who is he?’

‘My father—an escaped prisoner from the French Government—a political refugee who stands at last where tyranny cannot touch him. I have been living here, and watching here, two years, in the hope of his escape. I have waited for him, oh! so long and hopelessly, until you——’

‘Your father!’ I exclaimed; ‘oh! thank God! let me go to him—let me——’

‘No—please, no—for my sake.’

‘Is there another mystery—do I know all the truth, Virginie?’

‘Not yet.’

‘Ha! Is it true that you were in Paris at the Opera Bal-masqué a few nights ago?’

‘Quite true,’ she answered. ‘I met my father’s friends there, and it was in that motley dissipated crowd that some earnest souls plotted his deliverance.’

'But——'

'But I was a spy, Armand, to you,' she continued. 'It was the knowledge that you were travelling in England that set me on your track. Orders were telegraphed to me to seek you out—to make you my friend—you, son of the minister—to deceive you. And,' she added sorrowfully, 'I have done so.'

'A spy!' I echoed; 'a spy!'

'For my father's sake—a spy. Yes, that is all I am—and all I have been—and can ever be to you. And if you will forgive me, knowing how I loved that father, and how cruelly he had been treated by his enemies—if you will only say forgiveness, I shall be happy presently.'

'You should be happy now,—you have attained all that you strove for,—why should any words of mine be of any comfort?'

'Because—it is only you whom I have deceived, and you thought so highly of me, and had so deep a faith. Because,' she said, 'it was by that letter which you left with me that we forged your father's signature to an order for the immediate release of one terribly unfortunate—because——'

'Ha! I remember; yes, that *was* treachery.'

'It was a daughter's love surmounting every trust but one—because of that, forgive me, Armand, if you can.'

'I have been cruelly deceived.'

'Because I am going away to make his life content—because you I shall never see again—forgive me, do!'

I was still silent.

'Because I am unhappy, even in the midst of my success—because we part thus, and for ever—because, Armand, I had learned to love you very deeply at the last, and knew not what to do!'

'Virginie—is this true?'

'Heaven be my witness that it is,' she answered solemnly.

'Then——'

'Nay—let me go my way now, forgiven by the only man I have loved—and deceived. God bless you—kiss me—and good-bye.'

She held her face up to me like a little child, and I stooped and kissed it—sign of forgiveness and of my strange love for her.

Then she tottered away, and would have fallen, had I not hastened after her, and supported her steps towards the grim man waiting for his daughter. He raised his hat as we approached, and she passed from me to him—and I saw her no more in all my after life.





Through figures grave as royal shroes.



Ballad of Antique Dances.

I

BEFORE the town had lost its wits
 And scared the bravery from its beaux,
 When money-grubs were merely cits
 And verse was crisp and clear as prose,
 Ere Chloe and Strephon came to blows
 For votes, degrees, and cigarettes,
 The world rejoiced to point its toes
 In Gigue, Gavotte, and Minuets.

II

The solemn fiddlers touch their kits;
 The tinkling clavichord o'erflows
 With contrapuntal quirks and hits;
 And, with all measure and repose,
 Through figures grave as royal shows,
 With noble airs and pirouettes,
 They move, to rhythms HANDEL knows,
 In Gigue, Gavotte, and Minuets.

III

O Fans and Swords, O Sacques and Mits,
 That was the better part you chose!
 You know not how those gamesome chits
 Waltz, Polka, and Schottische arose,
 Nor how Quadrille—a kind of doze
 In time and tune—the dance besets;
 You aired your fashion till the close
 In Gigue, Gavotte, and Minuets.

ENVOY.

Muse of the many-twinkling hose,
 TERPSICHORE, O teach your pets
 The state, the charm, the grace that glows
 In Gigue, Gavotte, and Minuets!

Prince Saroni's Wife.

I.

THE Prince, when I first had the honour of knowing him, was a young man of about twenty-seven or -eight; a thorough Italian in nature and aspect, though he spoke correct English, and was accustomed to foreign manners and men. His face, when you examined it, was undeniably handsome; but the type was so different from our Anglo-Saxon traditions of masculine beauty, that I fancy he usually produced the impression of something bizarre and noticeable, rather than of classic comeliness, on the ordinary beholder. I recollect his being presented, on one occasion, to one of the reigning beauties of the London Season, a young lady who was certainly not deficient in familiarity with the ways and looks of the average male social animal; but she turned pale as her eyes fell upon him, responded to his courteous advances incoherently and with manifest nervousness, and within a few minutes began to laugh hysterically and had to be taken to her carriage. So far as I have ever been able to find out, the poor prince was not in the least to blame, and he was unquestionably not a little distressed by the incident. But Mrs. Fulvia, whenever his name was mentioned to her afterwards, would shudder and turn away her lovely head. 'He is hideous!' she would exclaim: 'I felt as if I were being drawn into the power of a demon! It seemed to me as if his eyes left a black mark upon me!' Saroni's eyes were certainly very black, and so was his short erect hair, which had a crisp curl through it that inspired someone to say that it looked as if his head were encompassed with black flames. Black, also, and wiry was his untrimmed but not overgrown beard, which came down to a point below the chin, owing, perhaps, to his fondness for laying hold of it and letting it slip through his hand. His complexion was dark but not sallow; there was life and blood beneath it. On his temple, beneath the skin, a peculiar vein was discernible; it lay in just such curves as a serpent makes in swimming rapidly through the water. When the prince was in a serene mood, this strange little vein was scarcely seen; but as soon as he became excited or laughed, it started into prominence; and, if the testimony of people like Mrs. Fulvia is to be received, actually wriggled! I mention these things merely to give what colour I

can to Saroni's portrait; it would be vain to attempt to describe a man like him by a dry enumeration of physical details. He was lithe and at the same time leisurely in his movements; though his gesticulation was sometimes rapid, and redolent of the picturesque suggestiveness natural to an Italian. 'Saroni is as natural as a dog,' a friend of his once said of him, and it expressed very well a certain innocent animalism that characterised him. He was in such thorough good humour with his body and its senses—he so enjoyed their services and companionship—and he uniformly alluded to that enjoyment with such ingenuousness and simplicity, that we sometimes found ourselves wondering how it was that we had forgotten to be scandalised. But the fact was, Saroni was what is termed a privileged person, and he was privileged by nature still more than by rank and position. Everybody liked him (except the few who, like Mrs. Fulvia, conceived an involuntary aversion for him at first sight), and everybody was content that he should behave like himself and not like other people. Of course it must not be inferred from this that Saroni was a boor or a fool. He was a gentleman and an aristocrat; his social position was complete; he was never awkward and never dull. Nevertheless, underneath that refined surface, not interfering with it, but contriving to exist in superficial harmony with it, you might always discern the unconventional, unsophisticated, spontaneous animal; thoroughly at home and comfortable in its human cage, and able to fulfil all its instincts without so much as rubbing against its barriers.

But perhaps I am giving prominence to an aspect of Saroni's character which was not in reality the predominant one. He came to London as an attaché of the Italian Embassy; it was a post of honour rather than of emolument or diplomatic complexity; and to Saroni it practically meant an introduction under the best auspices to the best of London Society. He fully availed himself of his opportunities, and pleased himself immensely with everything. The amount of downright hard work he could get through in the course of a London season was surprising; nothing could make him feel blasé, or dull the freshness and poignancy of his satisfactions. It was a curious and, perhaps, anomalous spectacle—that of a man essentially so close to the primitive creature, expanding himself without stint or uneasiness in one of the most stolidly artificial societies in the world. But Saroni seemed always not so much to accommodate himself to circumstances as to accommodate circumstances to himself. I apprehend, moreover, that what was so luxuriant in him was present, in at least germinal form, in much more conventional people; so that he may

have found in secret or intuitive sympathies all the response that was necessary to his spiritual composure.

There was in Saroni, apart from or outside of his social and emotional man, a subtle and sagacious intellect. He sometimes darted a look at you, so penetrating and comprehensive that, if it had not been for the laughing roguishness of expression that accompanied it, you would have felt yourself uncomfortably transparent. He was capable of rapid and complicated mental operations; of making instant but singularly acute estimates of motives and characters; of taking bold and confident action on data which would only have made a less finely organised man hesitate. He possessed also the power of continuous application or attention, insomuch that he could think out an abstruse or involved subject, hour in and hour out, until he had completely resolved and mastered it. I used to fancy—and I was not alone in my opinion—that Saroni would have been all the better, both on his own account and on that of his friends, if he had lacked this vigorous intellectual gift. It did not altogether fall in with our general conception of his character, and, besides, it was the only trait about him which was not entirely amiable. It was difficult to imagine the prince doing anything wicked; but if he ever should have that misfortune, it was evident to his friends that the evil counsel would proceed from his brain and not from his heart. To do him justice, however, he seldom obtruded his brains upon anybody, and one might easily have been acquainted with him for a long time without ever being startled or inconvenienced by them.

This is all that it seems worth while to say at present about the personal character and manifestations of Prince Saroni. He was a zealous and, upon the whole, a rather unsuccessful gambler; but that was no more than might have been expected of a man of his temperament.

II.

ONE evening in August, Prince Saroni walked over from his lodgings near Piccadilly to Waterloo Station, and took the train thence to Richmond. Arrived there, he got out, passed through the town, crossed the bridge, and proceeded in a south-westerly direction for about half a mile.

It was a still, hazy evening, and the harvest moon was rising. From a church somewhere in the town the clock struck nine. Saroni turned aside from the road along which he was travelling, and followed a narrow lane which was overshadowed on each side by short elm trees. In about two minutes he paused opposite a

gate, beyond which an avenue led up to a small villa. He sat down on a stone post beside this gate, took out his cigarette case and lighted a cigarette, and then, folding his arms, he gazed at the dim moon and smoked. After a while he rose to his feet, and looked eagerly over the gate up the avenue. A darkly-clad figure came with a light step over the gravel, and having passed through the gate, turned to him and put both hands in his. He drew the figure towards him, threw his arms round it and kissed it on both cheeks and on the mouth.

'Do you love me as much as ever?' inquired a low woman's voice.

'As ever? I love you ten times!' was the reply. 'Are not you Ethel and I am Saroni?'

'There are many other Ethels in London more lovable than I am.'

'I do not know them! They perhaps are lovable by others, but not by me. I find all myself in you. When I am with you, then only I am not alone.'

The girl rested her hands on his shoulders and looked intently into his eyes. As revealed by the moonlight, her countenance showed a type of beauty at once serious and spirited. There was power in her dark level brow, and in the putting together of her full but resolute lips. Her face was rather long, and appeared nearly colourless; but most faces appear so when shone upon by the moon. Her dark brown hair was drawn back from her forehead, and massed in a coil behind. So far the expression of the features was of gravity and steadfastness; but in the wide and sensitive nostrils, in a certain kindling and dilatation of the eyes, and in an occasional defiant movement of the corners of the mouth, was discernible a haughty and passionate spirit. Her figure was of the middle height, deep-bosomed, round-armed, and justly proportioned. She was a woman well worth loving and being loved by; but the man who would venture to deceive or wrong her might make up his mind to nothing less than tragedy.

'I am a fool to be here,' she said after a pause, dropping her hands, 'and a great fool to love you as much as I do. Can you tell me what makes me do it?'

'I? I have never thought,' answered Saroni, caressing her arms and meeting her gaze smilingly. 'It is glorious to love, I think. I have always not known what I was meant to do, and I wondered; but so soon as I saw you, I knew then I was meant to love you. It makes me happy and strong here!' he struck his breast, and smiled again. 'To me it seems the fools are the ones who do not love.'

'Have you never loved anyone before me?'

'I once thought yes,' said Saroni, musing, 'but that was before we loved. Those other loves are a trouble; it was that I loved myself, not them; so, after they had helped me to love myself, then I was fatigued and wanted them to go away. But you make me go out from myself, and the more I go out, the stronger I am to go. I love you for ever!'

'Let us walk down the lane a little,' said the girl. 'My father thinks I have gone to my room, and if he should come out—. . . Yes, I am a fool, but I don't care. I have tried wisdom, and found no pleasure in it. Some people, I suppose, do not need to be foolish in order to be happy, but I am not one of them. The world has gone hard with me ever since I can remember. No matter! I don't care—now!'

She spoke the last word with infinite tenderness. They were walking slowly down the dark lane; Saroni's arm was flung about her shoulders. She stopped, and, slowly disengaging herself, faced him. 'You have taken me beyond my own help,' she said, with a tremor in her voice. 'Oh! this love! it makes me helpless. I would do or be anything in the world for you. I don't understand how it can be so with me. Father has told me so often that I never should care for anyone, that I believed him. He thinks so still, I suppose!' She laughed a little, and paused. 'Even now,' she went on, 'I sometimes tell myself you cannot deserve it all. I don't flatter myself that you are altogether good. You may be all evil, for what I know. It makes no difference, though. I should love you just the same if I knew you were wicked—I should love your wickedness! Father is a good man, and I don't love him. What are his books and his sermons to me? I didn't make good and evil, and I am not obliged to order my love according to another's rule. Evil may be my good, if I choose—it is a question of words. Well, you see what a fool I am.'

Saroni could do many things which, in another man, would have seemed extravagant and absurd. He knelt down on the grassy pathway at Ethel's feet, took her hands, and pressed them against his cheeks.

'You are my Madonna,' he said passionately. 'I say my prayers to you. I have no heaven above you. You step on my heart: you live in my soul. To touch you makes me a king: to kiss you makes me immortal! If you were thirsty, I would give you my blood to drink. I do not find it dark when you are with me, for then the eyes of my love are opened. Darling, give me your lips!'

She stooped, sighing with delight.

They walked on in silence, and, emerging from the lane, crossed the road, and the meadow beyond. By-and-by they came to the brink of the river.

'This is where we first met,' said Ethel. 'You upset your boat against that snag, and came floundering ashore here where I was sitting. What a wet wild creature you looked! What a little while ago that was—not more than six weeks! It was in the last days of June; and I have seen you—eight times since then! Eight hours! how can such a moment change one's whole long weary life?'

'It is like death, which changes all in a moment,' said Saroni musingly.

'Yes, it is like death,' assented Ethel. 'And, like death, it opens a new life that is passed in heaven—or in hell! Which will it be for us, I wonder!'

'I do not fear; I am content,' said the Italian, folding his arms and gazing into the black stream. 'Love must be always love, even in hell.'

'But how will our love end?' pursued the girl, passing her arm beneath his, and leaning her head on his shoulder.

'What do you mean by "end"?' demanded Saroni quickly.

'I mean, when it becomes misery, as it will when we are parted. We shall be parted. I have no money and no rank. My father is a poor dissenting minister. You are a prince, and I don't know what beside—and a Roman Catholic. You cannot marry me.'

'I did not make myself a prince or a Roman Catholic,' said Saroni; 'but I became your lover; and whatever I am else is only so much more to lay at your beloved feet. As long as you and I are man and woman, we are married; and if, in some church, before some priest, I had married another woman, you would still be my wife, and not she.'

'Saroni, are you asking me to become your mistress?' inquired Ethel, in a very quiet voice.

'My mistress? No!' exclaimed he, with a vigorous gesture of aversion. 'That is not a word for you. You are my ——'

'Wait a moment. I love you with my whole heart: it is the only thing my heart has ever done. I have lived to myself until lately, and thought my own thoughts; and I don't pretend to believe all the superstitions and tyranny that are called religion. If you and I were equals, Saroni—if you had no more to lose before the world than I have—I would come to you freely; I shouldn't care for any security greater than your love, because no security

would be worth anything to me if that were gone. Oh, that would be sweet!’

She murmured these last words abstractedly, still clasping Saroni's arm, and pressing her cheek against his shoulder. He looked down at her curiously, squeezing his beard in his hand. He could perceive that it was a moment of exalted emotion with her, and he knew enough of her to know that it was impossible to foretell what the next moment would bring forth.

At first she did not seem to intend saying anything more. She lingered over her last thoughts, as if loth to deal with others. But at length, separating herself from the Italian, and standing alone upon the margin at a little distance from him, she raised her eyes and said—

‘But do not make me jealous!’

Saroni gave a short remonstrative laugh, throwing out his arms and slanting his head to one side. ‘There could be no one for whom to be jealous but you yourself,’ he exclaimed.

‘It would not be enough that you should love no one else,’ continued Ethel, beginning to breathe faster. ‘The touch of another woman's hand on yours would be poison to me. I don't build my honour, as other women do, on a ceremony or a dogma. To be married before a priest is nothing to me, if that which makes the marriage real is kept back. But I have an honour of my own, and that no one shall tamper with. I would follow you on my knees round the world; but I would rather see you dead, and die myself, than find that you had deceived me, or shared a word or a thought that has passed between us with any other woman. Are you true?’ she suddenly and breathlessly demanded, stepping nearer and gazing at him through the gloom. ‘If we are ever to part, tell me now, and let us part here.’

‘And if we were to part, where would you go?’ asked the Italian.

‘I would go home to my father, and copy out his sermons, and darn his stockings, and listen to his scoldings, and be respectable and peaceful. . . . I would go underneath that water: and you should see my drowned face before your eyes the rest of your life!’ These sentences were uttered with fierce excitement. Saroni had been watching her keenly while she spoke, with that peculiar astute expression which has been already alluded to. So far as could be judged in the darkness, he did not seem discomposed or depressed by her words; they appeared to give him pleasure and encouragement. He tossed back his head and stamped his foot, as if finally taking some resolution. Then he grasped her hands impulsively and lifted them together to his lips.

‘Yes, you are the woman that I thought, and that I need,’ he said confidently and emphatically. ‘Now I know that you are as strong and brave as you are beautiful and lovely. If you were opposed of some obstacle, some enemy, you would crush it, or you would die. I am of that spirit also. My right to live as I will is as great as the right of the world to prevent me. A crime is not what the one man does to free himself, but it is what society does to oppress him. Now you shall read in my soul. I shall give up to you everything. I shall trust you in such things that you shall never find it possible to have distrust of me: for it will give you power over me that you can never lose, as long as you have life. Come, and listen!’

They turned away from the river and walked slowly back across the meadow. The belated waterman, who had been lying in his skiff beneath the shadow of the bushes, could perceive that the foreign gentleman was talking very rapidly and earnestly, and that the young lady seemed a good deal taken aback. And that was the last that he heard of them. But an hour later, Ethel Moore was lying face-downwards on her bed, with fingers clutching the pillow, and a wild tumult in her heart; and Prince Saroni was playing cards at his club, and already losing heavily.

III.

ABOUT the middle of August, just when everybody was well started on the usual summer migration, it became known that Prince Saroni was going to be married. The news was unexpected in itself, but that it should be taking place in the absence, as it were, of any witnesses was generally held to be a failure in social courtesy. There was not one of us who would not have given almost anything to see the prince's wedding: to mark his behaviour, and observe whether he was able to remain as distinctively himself, under those overpoweringly conventional circumstances, as in the less trying conditions of life. To add to the bitterness of our curiosity, the lady in the case was a personage unknown to London. It was rumoured that she was stupendously wealthy; but she had not shown herself during the season, and whether she were young or old, lovely or hideous, white or black, we were left to conjecture. As if to destroy what little hope there might have been of a tardy compensation for these injuries, it was stated in the ‘Morning Post’ of August 15 that the auspicious event would come off on September 1, and that immediately afterwards the bride and bridegroom would leave England for the United States, where the prince

was understood to have accepted an important diplomatic mission. So that we should not ever be able to clear up our mystification at all.

It was at this juncture that I rejoiced, for the first and only time in my life, that circumstances had stood in the way of my leaving London as early as the rest of the world had done. I had been taking little runs down to Greenwich or out to Hampton Court, for breaths of air, but had postponed my real vacation until later. It was two or three weeks since I had happened to come across Saroni, and I had supposed, until the grand announcement reached my ears, that he had departed to the moors or to the continent along with the rest. I now made the best of my way to his house in Bruton Street, and was fortunate enough to find him in.

He was lying in a recklessly negligent attitude on his sofa, one hand pulling at his beard, while with the fingers of the other he beat a devil's tattoo on the floor. A sash of crimson silk was bound round his waist, and he had on a loose jacket and waistcoat of fine white cashmere, trimmed with broad gold braid, which brought into splendid relief the Indian swarthinness of his face. He half rose when he saw me, and stretched out his left hand (Saroni could never be got to comprehend the difference between his right hand and his left) to bid me welcome. His grasp, without being firm, was always warm and cordial. 'I am glad to see you, my dear,' he said. 'You take off your hat, your coat. You lie down on the sofa vis-à-vis. The cigarettes are on the table. Some ice claret punch is left in the silver jug, isn't it? Now we shall be at our ease.'

As soon as I decently could, I began. 'What charming news is this I hear, Saroni! you going to become a benedict?'

'Oh yes, oh yes!' returned he, rather indifferently. He rolled over on his sofa so as to face me, and added, 'I shall be married to her in two weeks.'

'But how dark you've kept about it! And there'll be nobody in town to see you turned off.'

'Well, now I shall tell you about it,' he exclaimed, all at once swinging himself to a sitting posture, and rubbing his hands through his hair. 'There has been no one to talk to all the time, and I am tired of keeping so much to myself. Will it be tiresome to you? Take more punch!'

'The punch is good, but your story will be better. Out with it!'

'Humph! I suppose it is the same as often happens,' remarked Saroni, with his elbows on his knees and his shoulders up to his ears. 'It is an affair——arranged! you understand. The lady

thinks it will be nice to be princess; and I think—well, I think I have very badly played cards this summer, that is all. We buy each other: it is that! And since she did not make her money any more than I make my rank, so we both cost each other nothing, except the trouble of living together: that is all there is of it!’

This unprecedentedly frank confession amused me greatly; it was not only comic in itself, but it was quite in accord with Saroni’s unique character. The social institution of matrimony must of course, to this primitive creature, seem a ponderous nuisance. Love, for a man like him, should be nothing more ceremonious than the pairing of doves or deer: a sort of annual excursion, to be repeated with variations.

‘So I am not very sad if there will not be many people at the church,’ concluded Saroni, getting up from the sofa and giving himself a thorough stretching.

‘I don’t remember having heard the name of the lady, as it was given in the “Post,”’ remarked I. ‘Is she a native of London?’

‘I have never asked her. She has been since six or seven years in a French convent, to be made wise and charming. She is twenty-one years old, and has brown hair and eyes, and a face smooth and pale. Her name is the Miss Medwin, and she has twenty thousand a year. That is all that I know of Mademoiselle my fiancée.’

‘But you have not told me,’ I ventured to interpose, ‘how much you are in love with her.’

‘My dear,’ said the Prince, ‘it is a thing I do not ask myself. It is not of the bargain. How otherwise? I have seen her five or six times, always with Signora the mamma of the company. We talk of the weather, of France, of Italy: I make my salute and I depart. To think of love would be to defame the proprieties of the matrimonial state. It is a thing we pass over.’

‘You will come to it soon enough afterwards,’ I affirmed optimistically.

Saroni thrust his hands in his pockets and lounged up and down the room. ‘There is one thing that makes it unlikely,’ he said after a while. ‘I love another lady.’

‘This will never do!’ returned I with severity.

‘Eh! it is done. It is the fate of this civilisation of ours. It is not enough that you live with the lady you do not like; you must also not live with the lady you love. If I had not come to know Miss Ethel Moore, I could have been comfortable to be dull with Miss Medwin. You see, I reserve nothing from you. Why should I? The worst is that it is so.’

'But surely, if your happiness really depends on it, you can marry Miss Moore as easily as Miss Medwin. I presume there is not much to choose between the families?'

'My dear, there are two things. Miss Medwin has twenty thousand a year of property unencumbered; Miss Moore has nothing but herself—who is more lovely and precious than all the gold in the world, but who cannot pay the hundred debts that I have made since I am living in this your charming London. Would you know how much I must pay?—it is fifty thousand pounds, and that is after I have paid away all there was of my own. The second thing is that, if I marry with anyone who is not a good Catholic, my inheritance is forfeit, and my younger brother succeeds me. He is a good boy, but I do not want that. The way is so!'

'And what does Miss Moore say to all this?' I demanded, after some reflection.

The prince halted in his walk, and shook his head gloomily. 'To tell her shall be the last thing. She is proud and fierce, and she loves me with all her might. She has told me once, "If you deceive me, I go in the water, and my face that is drowned shall meet you always!" Because of all that, I am unhappy. I think sometimes it would be better to use this.'

As he spoke, he took from the table a small silver-mounted pistol, and put the muzzle between his white teeth.

The action was unexpected, and something in the man's look made me feel that it was not a piece of bravado. Beyond a doubt, this poor prince, with his pleasure-loving, unsophisticated nature and vigorous untried affections, had got so ensnared in our great social cobweb as to have seriously meditated making away with himself. Suicide would appear to him the most obvious and easy way out of all difficulties; and I could only wonder—and be thankful—that in his solitary unhappiness he had not already made the experiment. That the thing could be considered morally reprehensible had never probably occurred to him; his philosophy of life (so far as he had ever declared any) being to the effect that everybody ought to do what seems to them good, and trust to a beneficent Providence that it would all come out right. However, as an older man than himself, and one whose contact with the realities of things had begun comparatively early, I took it upon myself to place the rights of the matter before him in as forcible a manner as I could. My arguments and earnestness produced some effect upon him, and he ultimately seemed inclined to view his prospects in a somewhat less despondent light. I also attempted to persuade him to explain his position to Miss Moore as frankly

as he had explained it to me, and trust to her good sense to accept the inevitable, and not to allow a first disappointment to mar her hopes in the future. I did not, indeed, at that time, seriously apprehend that the girl was really so ready to fling away her life as Saroni seemed to believe; but I recognised the possible consequences to a passionate girl of a sudden and irretrievable shock to her affections, and I feared that the abrupt disclosure of the fact that the man on whom she had built her hopes was actually married to another would be more likely to impel her to some rash act than would a guarded intimation of what was in store, before it had come to pass. But on this point I could not get Saroni to see with me. So far as I could judge, his disinclination was owing rather to the reluctance (natural to a man of his character) to do anything painful so long as it could possibly be avoided, than to an incapacity to perceive that I had reason on my side. Be that as it may, I was at length obliged to leave him without having brought him to any satisfactory decision on the point in question, and not without some misgivings as to the upshot of the affair.

I called upon him several times after this, but failed to find him at home. One day, however, I met him coming out of his club in Pall Mall, and at his request accompanied him home. On our arrival there, he threw off his hat and coat, as his custom was, and stretched himself out at full length on the hearthrug. His aspect was more dejected than ever.

‘Well, what is the news since I saw you last?’ I demanded in a cheerful tone.

‘She knows everything now,’ replied Saroni, without looking up.

‘You mean Miss Moore, I suppose?’

He nodded.

‘Well, you did right to tell her. How did she take it?’

‘I wrote to her,’ he replied; ‘and this morning I got that packet.’ He pointed to a small parcel on the table, done up in white paper, and addressed in a female hand. It had been opened, and then folded again.

‘The things you had given her?’ I said. He looked at me without speaking. ‘And what word did she send?’ I continued.

‘That was all,’ answered the poor fellow. ‘There was no letter—there was nothing. If she had hated me, it could not have been otherwise.’

‘If she does hate you,’ said I, ‘don’t you see it’s the best thing that could possibly happen? It’s a sure sign that she will recover, and forget you before you forget her.’

‘But I don’t want her to hate me : I love her more than ever : and I don’t want her to forget me!’ declared this incorrigible young nobleman.

‘In that case, I have no further sympathy to bestow upon you,’ returned I, half angry and half amused. ‘It’s my opinion you’re not half so badly off as you pretend. You don’t understand Englishwomen; they are of a different constitution from those that grow under an Italian sun. Take my word for it, you are well out of the scrape; and you and Miss Moore will both live to rear your respective families in peace and comfort.’

‘You are sensible, but to be sensible is not everything,’ was the prince’s answer. ‘I have something here’—he struck his breast—‘that tells me it will not end as you think. Well, I am not good company to-day, my dear. I wished you should know the last, that is all; so now you shall leave me to be disagreeable to myself. *A rivederla!*’

I accepted my dismissal, expecting soon to see him again. But, as it turned out, that was not to be. We did not meet until after the ocean had been between us.

IV.

A few days previous to the date appointed for Saroni’s wedding he made his appearance at a large house in South Kensington, and was immediately shown upstairs. After he had walked up and down the parlour for about five minutes, a young lady came in, let her hand rest in his for a moment, and then seated herself in an easy-chair beside a huge delft jar full of flowers.

‘You are earlier than I expected,’ she said. ‘You don’t often come too early.’

Her face was pretty, though somewhat lacking in expression; but she had a plaintive way of drawing her eyebrows together and bringing up her lower lip, like a spoilt child. Her figure was shapely, and rather slender than plump, and she managed it with singular grace. Her dress was rich, but made with perfect art, and admirably adapted to the wearer.

‘Does it please you for me to be early?’ demanded Saroni, standing in front of her, with one hand resting on the jar of flowers.

‘That is a strange question to ask the girl who is going to become your wife next week,’ she replied, with a reproachful glance. ‘I don’t know what you expect me to be! I have never known any man before you, and I should like to feel at least ac-

quainted with you before I give myself to you for ever. When I was at the convent, everybody was good to me, and did things to please me; but I don't know whether you will be good to me. I should like to be sure that you will at least try to make me happy. I have not been very happy since I left the convent. Mamma is almost like a stranger to me, and she is such an invalid she cannot amuse me, or go about with me. I have been in London six months, and I have not seen anything or met anybody except you. Sometimes I feel afraid of you.'

'I have not much that I can give, but what there is you will have,' said Saroni, pulling his beard. 'You will be a princess.'

The girl opened and shut her fan, looked up at him for a moment, and looked away. 'Yes,' she said, almost inaudibly: 'if it had not been for that . . .'

'I have something for you to hear,' said Saroni, breaking into the pause. He plucked a cluster of white geranium from its stem, and twisted it between his fingers as he went on. 'If you think it would be bad for you, it is the time to tell it now. Perhaps I would not be a good husband—how can I know it better than you? Signorina, I do not wish to do you harm. If you say now that you will be free, I will say it also. After five days it is too late. To be a princess and not yet to be happy is possible. Shall it be like that?'

The girl's face flushed, and her lip trembled. 'You want to break off our engagement,' she said angrily. 'You have led me on all this time, only to tell me that now! It is unkind and cruel of you!' she went on, breaking into tears. 'You want to get rid of me, and you want me to bear the blame. I won't have it so! If you mean to leave me, go; but you shall never say that it was I who proposed it. You think you can insult me because I have no one to defend me. I believe you love someone else, and you want to go to her. If you do, I hope she will serve you as you have served me!'

Saroni's face darkened, and he set his teeth together. But after a few moments, shrugging his shoulders with a half-smile, he tossed away the sprig of geranium, stooped forward, and lightly touched her shoulder. She drew away from his touch petulantly, her face buried in her hands. In a little while, however, she allowed herself to glance at him askance, and finally wiping her eyes, and catching her breath in little sobs, she disposed herself to listen to her future husband's apology, if it should be forthcoming.

'We will not remember all that,' was what he said; 'it is gone by.'

'If you expect me to forget such things, why do you say them?' was her rejoinder.

'One must say them, so that it may be understood and settled,' answered Saroni, in a less serious tone than he had before used. 'It is told me that I am a wild animal—that I do not know how to be as other men. But after this there shall be no other hesitations; we shall go on, and not have fears, and enjoy ourselves. You are so pretty, you can make wild animals tame. Well, now I have something to tell you besides that.'

'Is it something pleasant?' asked she, with a plaintive look.

'Oh, very pleasant! We shall be married on Thursday, but it is Saturday when the steamer goes from Liverpool; that gives a day before we have to go there. At Richmond the river is very pretty. You have not seen it?'

'No, indeed I have not,' said the girl, sitting up and beginning to look animated.

'There is a house there beside the river, and a boat,' continued Saroni, in the same light tone. 'They will be ours until the day after. In the afternoon, after you have been made a princess, we shall say good-bye to your mamma, and go down there by ourselves. We shall have our dinner there, and in the evening, when it is cool, we shall get in the boat and row along the river. Then, on Friday, it will be time to go to Liverpool, and sail to America. Will that be good for a beginning?'

'I think I shall like it very much.'

'We shall say good-bye to England there,' remarked the Italian, drawing a deep breath. 'Have you loved England, Signorina?'

'Oh, pretty well; but I have not had much time, you know.'

'It is better, I think, you should not love it very much, since we must leave it. But I have been here longer.' He paused, his black eyes resting musingly on her upturned face. 'I shall say good-bye to many things on that day,' he added, dropping his voice. 'Good-bye for the last time.'

I often used to wonder, at a subsequent period, what possessed Saroni to make this expedition to Richmond. Not that I felt any doubt that his purpose was to see Ethel Moore; that was evident at once. But why should he wish fruitlessly to torture himself and her by such a leave-taking, and why, especially, should he deliberately plan to have it take place on the first night of his marriage, and with his wife, as it were, standing by? One theory that I attempted to adopt was that he had hoped to bring the two women together and effect a sort of reconciliation between them,

But the thing was too unlikely, even if the appalling sequel had not additionally discredited it. To this hour, I can do little more than conjecture what may have been in Saroni's mind when, on that Thursday evening, he got into the boat with his new-made wife, and dropped leisurely down the stream. All that can be confidently asserted is that the Princess Saroni's innocent little heart was infinitely far from harbouring any suspicion of what was in the wind. Her only thought was to enjoy the sights and sounds of the twilight river, together with the pleasurable excitement of the first opening out before her of a new and untried life. There is nothing to show that she was so much as aware of the existence of Ethel Moore, much less that she meditated any injury towards her. Hers was not a profound nature, nor had the method of her bringing-up tended to enlarge her faculties; but she was at all times good-humoured and easily pleased, and was incapable of bearing serious malice towards anyone.

What actually happened, so far as was known at the time, was simple enough, and is easily told. The prince and princess dined at six o'clock, the dinner having been cooked for them by the *chef* of a neighbouring hotel; for, as they were going to spend but one night in the villa, they had brought no servants of their own with them. At half-past seven they got into the boat, Saroni taking the oars, while his wife sat in the stern and managed the tiller. The villa is situated a little above the old stone bridge; and a good while before eight o'clock two or three persons noticed the boat drop down beneath it, pass on to the railway bridge lower down, and so go round the curve and out of sight. From this time nothing was known to have been seen of them; but it was inferred that they could not have remained away longer than three hours, because, at a quarter before eleven o'clock, a policeman testified to having seen the parlour lighted, and Princess Saroni in the act of drawing down the blind. The following morning the party were driven to the railway station, were locked into a reserved compartment by the deferential guard (who had the prince's half-crown in his pocket), and so proceeded to London. The same night they went on, in accordance with their prearranged plan, to Liverpool; and finally they embarked on Saturday on board the Cunard Company's steamship 'Russia,' which duly landed them in New York on the Tuesday week following. Such is the plain chronology of events, with only a single ghastly occurrence omitted. For on that same Thursday night of the newly-married pair's excursion down the river, a human life came to a violent end within a few yards of a place where their boat must have passed. Whether or not the death were self-inflicted, and whether or not

the Prince and Princess Saroni were aware of the tragedy at the time it happened, were questions which engaged the attention and taxed the brains of many ingenious persons for a long time afterwards.

V.

It was not until the Monday, if I remember right, that in looking over the morning paper I came across a paragraph announcing another 'mysterious disappearance.' A young lady, Ethel Moore by name, had left her home near Isleworth, on the Thames, somewhere between seven and nine o'clock on the evening of Thursday, September 1. Her description followed; and it was requested that any information should be sent to her father, the Rev. James Moore, at the above address.

The name, of course, struck me at once, and gave me that uncomfortable sensation which belongs to those who find themselves innocent accomplices, so to speak, in some questionable affair which has already attained publicity. It was, indeed, open to me not to reveal my knowledge of Miss Moore, and my first impulse was to adopt that course; but a little reflection convinced me that I had no right to consult my own convenience in a case of such evident gravity. I could not help connecting her disappearance with the fact (whereof I alone was cognisant) of her relations with Saroni; nor did I entertain much doubt that this was the only clue which would be at all likely to lead to her discovery. Naturally, I was at this period far from imagining that the poor girl was not alive; in fact, if the truth must be told, I had stumbled into a wild idea that she had in some way eloped with the Italian prince. It is needless to add that this notion did not withstand the test of a few hours' consideration of the circumstances. But where, then, was she? By the time I had asked myself this question once or twice, I began to realise that the elucidation of it might conceivably be attended with a good deal of inconvenience to my eccentric friend. Whatever line of action I decided upon, therefore, could not be too carefully thought out beforehand; and after spending the rest of the day in anxious cogitation, I determined to take a night's sleep upon it, and begin my labours with the freshness of the morning.

My first step, on the Tuesday, was to betake myself to Isleworth, and have an interview with the Rev. James Moore. He turned out to be a very grim and difficult old personage; and he not only had never heard that his daughter had lately indulged in an attachment to anyone, but he utterly and abusively refused to



Ethel Moore.

accept my insinuations to that effect. When, however, I had so far opened my mind to him as to shake his conviction on this point, he became equally intractable on another score; for now he declared that his daughter was a dishonoured wretch, and that he would never spend another thought or word upon her. And even after I had pointed out the utter improbability of their being together, and the possibility (which was hourly becoming more and more of a certainty to myself) that she had taken some still more desperate means of avoiding the agony of a separation, it was anything but easy to stimulate this cantankerous parent into betraying a decent degree of interest in her fate.

Unwilling to put the worst construction upon the case so long as any reasonable hope of a brighter solution remained, I began with setting the police in motion in whatever direction there was likelihood of her having taken flight. After two or three days' scouring of the country, including strict inquiry at most of the English seaports, the report was returned that no person answering to her description had been seen or heard of. Moreover, it now transpired that she had taken no money with her on leaving her father's house; the only articles belonging to her that were missing being the ordinary black silk dress that she wore, and a necklace and bracelet of chased silver which had been given to her by her deceased mother, and which she seldom was without. It was evident that she could not have travelled far on such capital as this. The area of inquiry was narrowing day by day, until at length it centred upon the river, and remained there. It had been my unwilling premonition all along that the revelation of the mystery was to be sought in no other place than this, and the slow logic of events was proving me to have been right.

I remember being struck, more than once, with the oddity of the fact that I, of all men, should be showing myself so active in a matter in which I had no personal stake. My indolence was temperamental, and had been steadily confirmed by practice; and yet here I was getting up early and going to bed late, and working zealously all day, on behalf of a woman whom I had never seen, and whose fate, whatever it was, could have no sort of bearing upon my own. But the truth was that Saroni, not Ethel Moore, was the real stimulus to my exertions. I apprehended that the catastrophe would tend in a greater or less degree to compromise him; and, as I thoroughly believed in his actual innocence of any voluntary blame, I was persuaded that whatever contributed towards discovering the facts must in proportion become auxiliary to his vindication. I was probably as intimate a friend as Saroni had possessed in London, and in this hour of his need I found

my affection for him even more cordial than I had supposed it to be.

On Monday, September 12, the revelation came. A fisherman, punting along the southern bank of the Thames, opposite Kew Gardens, hooked up the body of a woman who had evidently been in the water a good deal more than a week. Though greatly swollen and otherwise disfigured, it was still recognisable as that of a young woman with regular features and dark hair. I saw the body, as it lay awaiting the coroner's inquest, that same afternoon; and on my return to town I telegraphed to Saroni, under cover to his bankers in New York, the following message: 'Ethel Moore found drowned in Thames near Richmond. Send immediately sworn statement of your whereabouts and actions on September 1, between seven and eleven p.m.' This I despatched in anticipation of the turn the inquest was certain to take. I did not, indeed, expect that Saroni's personal presence could in any event be required; but I foresaw that his authenticated testimony might be valuable as a corroboration and amplification of my own. As regarded the identification of the remains, there was—'fortunately,' as the coroner remarked—no difficulty. I was present when that ceremony took place. 'Do you recognise this body as that of anyone you know?' inquired the official of the Rev. James Moore, who stood beside the pallet, with his hat dragged down upon his wrinkled brow, and the harsh skin puckering and twitching round the corners of his eyes and mouth.

'It is the body of my daughter, Ethel Moore,' replied he, with a dogged but unready utterance. 'I recognise it by the general appearance, though grievously disfigured; by the dress; by the initials on the handkerchief; and likewise by the necklace and bracelet of chased silver, which were given to her ten years ago by her mother, and which she habitually wore. Is that sufficient, sir?'

'Amplly sufficient, Mr. Moore,' returned the official, bowing, and eyeing him curiously.

The old man turned, and made as if he would go out of the door; but I noticed that his step was uncertain, and he stretched out one arm as though to grope his way. Coming against the jamb of the doorway, he grasped it between his hands and leaned his head and shoulder against it heavily. I thought he was going to fall, and put my arm underneath his. But after a minute or two his giddiness passed off; he freed himself from my support, and once more faced the heap of mortality on the pallet.

'Listen to me, sir,' he said, in a grating whisper; 'and you'—he beckoned to the policeman—'mark my words, and forget them

not. They will try to prove that this child committed suicide. I tell you it is false! She was murdered—murdered.’ He lifted his long arm with its bony hand clenched, and brought it down with a heavy gesture, to emphasise the word. ‘She was misled, and then murdered; I affirm it before my God! And so long as the Lord spares me life and sense, I will search to find the murderer out, and to bring him to justice. Have you heard me?’

‘All right, sir,’ said the policeman, respectfully, but not at all overawed; ‘I will make a note of your statement, and nobody will be ‘appier to take the guilty parties into custody, when found, than I shall. Meantime I will suggest, sir, that the less you allow yourself to get excited and talking in that kind of a way, the more likely you’ll be to get your ‘ands on the guilty parties, if any there be. You’ll be summoned on the inquest, sir, in course; I wish you good-day, sir.’

The main events of the (as it turned out to be) preliminary inquest may be briefly told. The discussion turned chiefly on the probability of suicide: for the theory of accidental death was negatived by the fact that a mass of stones, twenty or thirty pounds in weight, was found in a platted twine mailbag, attached to the girl’s waist. They had held the body down, and kept it from drifting. I related my conversation with Saroni, which went to show that a motive for suicide might exist. One juryman objected that the prince might have designedly led me to suppose that Ethel Moore’s attitude towards him was different from what may really have been the case; but this point was unexpectedly met by the testimony of a waterman, who stated that, some four weeks previous, he had been in the way of overhearing a conversation between Miss Moore (whom he knew by sight) and a ‘furren gentleman,’ whom he sufficiently described; in which the lady as good as vowed she’d drown herself if the gentleman went for to keep company with any other woman besides her. In short, the preponderance of evidence, as well as of rational probability, was overwhelmingly on the side of suicide; the single awkward circumstance of an opposite tendency being that Saroni should have visited Richmond, and been on the river, on the very night and at the very place in which the tragedy occurred. But although I was unable to furnish any authoritative explanation on this head, I submitted to the jury that if Saroni had meditated anything in the shape of a violent interview with Ethel Moore, he would assuredly not have taken his wife down the river with him to witness it. The coroner expressed his concurrence with this argument, but remarked that it would have been desirable to have Prince Saroni’s evidence as to how he spent the

evening of the 1st of September. I thereupon informed the jury that I had telegraphed to the prince in that sense three days before, and that the attested document might be expected to arrive in about a week. The coroner thanked me for my forethought, and adjourned the inquest until the desired link should be supplied.

It was in less than a week that I was startled by a sharp and imperious knock at my door; and before I could open my mouth to say 'Who's there?' the door was flung open, and in strode Saroni himself. He was gaunt, travel-stained, and hectic with excitement. I sprang to my feet, and we confronted each other for a moment without speaking.

'Is it true—this?' were his first words; and thrusting his hand in his pocket, he pulled out the torn and crumpled telegram that he had received in New York.

'Yes,' I answered. 'I am glad you came, Saroni; it is better on all accounts. Is your wife with you?'

'My wife? No!' He looked hard at me, and added, 'She will not be wanted.'

'Certainly not. And there will be no difficulty of any kind. Of course you can give the evidence that is wanted?'

He nodded. 'I saw her on that night,' he said. 'I went there to see her.'

'You did see her? Why? How?'

'Because of this,' he replied, producing a letter from his pocket, which he handed to me. It bore the date of August 25, was written in a woman's hand, and was signed 'Ethel Moore.' It was couched in sad but gentle terms, and the burden of it was that Saroni should meet her once more before he went away. 'Do not fear that I shall trouble you,' it said; 'I only want to part from you in kindness. And bring your wife with you, that I may see her, if possible, without her seeing me. Come to the place on the river bank that you know; I shall be near there at half-past eight on Thursday.' There was very little more than this in the letter.

'It certainly would not lead one to expect anything bad,' I remarked. 'Did you answer it?'

'I let her know I would be there. Then I went to the Miss Medwin and made arrangements that we should on that day come to Richmond.'

'Of course you said nothing to her of your intention in going there?' Saroni shook his head, and sank heavily into the chair which I had forgotten to offer him. I brought some wine, and he poured out and drank two or three glasses in succession. 'Did

you find Miss Moore in the same mood in which her letter seems to have been written?' I went on.

'I thought it—yes. I kissed her. Diavolo! I could have gone with her anywhere—to the death! If I had known this was to come—. . . Well, a woman can deceive!'

'Was there a meeting between her and your wife?'

'Bah! that would be folly. Perhaps Ethel could have seen her as we passed in the boat—I know not. I left her further along the bank, in the boat; then I came back walking. Ethel was there.' He stopped, and seemed for a while plunged in gloomy abstraction. 'Before ten minutes it was over; then I went back to the boat. She had seemed not very sad.'

'Poor girl!' I muttered. 'She must have plunged in that same night, after you had gone. Poor girl! After all, it was you who killed her, Saroni.'

'That is a lie!' cried he, leaping to his feet. At first I thought he was going to attack me. His set teeth gleamed through his black beard, and there was a glare in his eyes that was almost demoniacal. I had never seen such an expression in his face before, and, to tell the truth, it made me feel for a moment as if there might be possibilities in Saroni which I had not reckoned with. The next moment I had called to mind the state of nervous and mental exhaustion and exasperation under which he must be labouring, and felt no wonder that he should not be master of himself. With some difficulty I quieted him sufficiently to get him to lie down on the floor (he would not go near either the bed or the sofa), where after a few minutes he fell into a heavy sleep. There was a wild, haggard sort of beauty in him as he lay there. It was evening before he awoke; and then, refusing my invitation to dine, he went away with the understanding that we were to meet at the adjourned inquest on the morrow; and I was left alone to ponder over our strange interview.

For I must confess that it seemed to me strange, in more ways than as to its unexpectedness. Saroni had made no direct profession of grief for Ethel's terrible death: yet some such expression was to have been looked for from a man of impulses so unrestrained and primitive as his. His mood had seemed fierce, gloomy, and inward; and his burst of passion at my remark was perhaps not, after all, explicable on the theory of mere nervous irritation. Was a remorse haunting him to which he had given me no clue? I remembered his having told me of Ethel's threat to haunt him after her death, and I wondered whether some secret self-upbraiding of the nature to which I had alluded had indeed conjured up a grisly hallucination of ghostly visitations. Had he, in the

passion of their last farewell, spoken some word which had driven Ethel to desperation, and the memory of which dogged him now? I could only conjecture, and then hope that my more sombre conjectures were not true. I told myself, at last, that I did not understand Saroni; there were depths in him which I had not sounded. Meanwhile I was glad that the outburst which I had witnessed had not taken place before the coroner's jury.

The inquest was resumed next day, with Saroni as principal witness. On this occasion he was quiet and composed, and I noticed that he had taken unusual pains with his personal appearance. The gist of his evidence was substantially as I have given it; and although it surprised the jury, they were manifestly satisfied with it: the impression produced was a good one. The only noteworthy occurrence during the proceedings was the brief cross-questioning to which Saroni was subjected at the hands of the Rev. James Moore. The grim old minister had said little or nothing at the first inquest, beyond answering the few formal questions which were addressed to him; but now he emerged from his reserve.

'Sir,' said he, standing up, rigid and angular in his rusty black garb, and fixing his dull grey eyes on the vivid, swarthy Italian: 'Sir, did you love my daughter?'

'I loved her,' answered Saroni.

'Why did you keep me in ignorance of your love for her?'

'It was partly her own wish. She said you had never loved her, and she did not love you. I was not concerned to have to speak with you.'

The old man winced perceptibly at the first sentences, but he immediately commanded himself and went on.

'When you first met my daughter, were you betrothed to another lady?'

'Not at first; but in a little while after that.'

'When did you first tell my daughter of your betrothal?'

'It was between the first weeks of August.'

'How did she receive the announcement?'

'She said many things. There was pain and anger. She said she would drown herself in the river. I spoke so that she should not; but my heart was in trouble.'

'When she understood that, although you loved her, you would marry the other lady for her money, did you propose that your love should continue in dishonour?'

Saroni's face flushed, and the snake-like vein in his temple seemed to writhe. 'She would not have yielded to it,' he said in a defiant tone. 'It is you who would do her dishonour.'

'Did she submit tamely to be thrown aside, so that you might pay your debts and live in purple and fine linen?'

'No, she did not submit,' said Saroni, after a pause.

'In what way, if any, did you attempt to pacify her?'

'I said I would not be married to the other, and I would come to her, and lose all except her, if she would have it to be so.'

If you meant what you said, why did you not do it?'

'She would not have it so. You have read her letter, and you have said it was written in her hand.'

'She wrote the letter in order to secure the interview which, otherwise, you would have refused her. But what did she say to you, when you stood together on the river bank, just before you stuffed the handkerchief into her mouth, and strangled her with your hands, and then sank her body in the river with a bag of stones at her waist?'

In uttering these words, each one of which was charged with all the venom of bitter hatred, the bony figure of the grey-haired man seemed to grow taller, his clenched hands reached forward as if to crush his enemy, and his eyes had the dull fixed glitter of a serpent's. For an instant, it appeared to me that Saroni blenched. It may have been my fancy, however. The instant after, at all events, he had drawn himself up, and was saying with a quietness in which there was something contemptuous, 'I must request the court that it shall protect me. This man has gravely mistaken. I have never been to his daughter anything except her lover. I should be happier to be dead myself than to have harmed her, or let her be harmed.'

The coroner cleared his throat, and administered a mild remonstrance to the Rev. Mr. Moore, to which the jury murmured their assent. His attack, though ingeniously arranged, had failed in any way to invalidate the prince's testimony. No motive had been shown sufficient for even the shadow of a justification for a charge of murder. Every allowance should of course be made for the painful and harrowing position of the reverend father of the deceased, but he must try and reconcile himself to accepting facts as they were. The coroner went on to presume that the jury would not experience any difficulty in deciding upon their verdict. Perhaps they had decided upon it already?—The foreman replied that such was the case, and that their verdict was that deceased came to her death by drowning herself while temporarily in an unsound state of mind. They also desired to present their respectful condolences to deceased's father; and to thank Prince Saroni for his prompt courtesy in travelling three thousand miles

for the sake of assisting them in their duties. The inquest then closed.

But as Saroni and I were leaving the house, a heavy, hasty step came after us, and the Rev. James Moore placed himself in our way.

‘I wish to say a parting word to you, sir,’ he began, in his harsh monotonous tones, addressing himself to the prince, who faced him silently and contemptuously; ‘we shall see each other again. I saw murder in your face to-day, and I will wring the confession of it from you yet. You have escaped for once; but you will live day and night in fear of discovery; and when you are discovered, I shall be there to see. May God treat you with no more mercy than you showed to that dead girl!’

‘Sir, you make yourself in my way,’ was all that Saroni condescended to reply; and, passing by him, he resumed his walk by my side, to all appearance unmoved.

VI.

SARONI returned to America the week following. Of course he kept in retirement during the few days that he remained in London (which there was little difficulty in doing, since nobody was in town), and even I saw very little of him. In fact, I cannot say that I very assiduously sought his companionship. Some barrier—I could not divine what—seemed to lie between us, that had not been there before. He was not the same man that he used to be—though that was scarcely to be expected. He never wrote to me during his stay in Washington; but I used to occasionally hear of him indirectly. So far as could be judged, he appeared to have resigned himself to his lot very philosophically. He became noted in the American capital for his entertainments; and his wife, whom her marriage would seem to have improved and developed, was spoken of as a great beauty and a most charming hostess. It was added that the two were conspicuously fond of each other—a peculiarity which, on the other side of the Atlantic, stands less in the way of a married couple’s popularity than is the case in London.

In the year which ensued, the only incident worth recording as bearing upon the present history was the death of Mrs. Medwin, the Princess Saroni’s mother. She was the princess’s last surviving relative. Not long afterwards the rumour reached me that the Saronis were about to return to Europe. They would not, however, go to

London, but would land at Havre, and proceed in the first instance to Paris.

I should have mentioned that the Rev. James Moore did not allow the acquaintance between us, begun under such sinister circumstances, to drop. Ever and anon I ran across him, or received a call from him; and always he took care to inform me of the fact that his conviction of Saroni's guilt remained unaltered; and, further, that he was employing every means to come upon the evidence confirmatory of his suspicions, with good hopes of ultimate success. It was an ugly spectacle, that of this old man, by profession dedicated to the work of spreading Christ's gospel on earth, giving up his few remaining years of life to the prosecution of unholy and desperate revenge. But he would give ear to no representations on this score; his one thought—now practically his monomania—was to bring Saroni to the gallows. On this theme he would discourse, in his slow, acrid tones, at inexhaustible length; but without ever saying anything which might lead a sane person to suppose that his mania had anything to substantiate it.

About the time (it was in April, if I am not mistaken) that the Saronis were expected to arrive in Paris, I took a fancy to go thither myself. It was not with the special intention of seeing my old friend, though that was among my anticipations. As it happened, I encountered him on the first day after my arrival, at Munroe's banking house; and he at once invited me to visit him. He was considerably changed, both in aspect and in manner. He had grown so much stouter that, looking at his figure alone, I should never have recognised him; and his glance had lost the briskness and intensity that it used to have. His gait, too, was sluggish and dawdling; and altogether he impressed me as a man who had deteriorated. However, I promised to call on him and the princess on the first opportunity; and accordingly on the next afternoon I was ushered into her drawing-room.

She was a young and strikingly handsome woman, though a good deal emaciated; the American air seeming to have taken from her the flesh it had bestowed on her husband. Her eyes were large and brilliant, but they had an anxious, restless look, and she had a trick of ever and anon half glancing over her shoulder, though her only interlocutor was seated in front of her. Her hands, which were very refined in form and texture, and of a pale brown hue, were never completely at rest; if they were not playing with her fan or handkerchief, or moving a book or a paper-knife on the table, they were twisting themselves together slowly and ceaselessly in her lap. Her face, though not a happy or serene

one, had in it a great and yearning tenderness, and struck me as being somehow strangely pathetic.

She greeted me with cordiality; but I noticed, during the earlier part of our conversation, that she had the air of watching me with singular intentness—so much so, indeed, that on two or three occasions she replied at random to my remarks, or ignored them altogether. But after a time this watchfulness died away, and she became at length comparatively composed and unpreoccupied. The longer we talked, the more her charm grew upon me; and I wondered that Saroni should ever have wished for a better wife than this. Half as good a one, I thought, would have contented me.

‘How did you like America?’ I inquired.

‘Very much; it is a fine country, and they are an easy, hospitable people. We made many friends, whom I was sorry to leave. Perhaps we shall go back some day—soon.’

‘But we shall surely see you in London before you return?’

‘No,’ replied the princess, fixing her eyes upon me intently, and pressing her hands together. ‘No; we shall not go to London.’

‘Well, it is not a very cheerful place, certainly,’ said I, feeling that perhaps I had better not have introduced the subject. ‘It is neither picturesque nor salubrious. Paris and Washington are both much prettier places, and much better off for climate.’

This set us off talking about the comparative architectural merits of various cities, and the princess observed that she had some very beautiful photographs of the street in which they had lived while in Washington. ‘I must show it you,’ she added, ‘I think it is in this portfolio.’

The portfolio was in the window at the farther end of the room, a ponderous affair arranged on a mahogany stand. We walked over to it, and the princess began ransacking its contents in search of the photograph. While doing this she faced the window, and had her back to the door, while I stood sideways in respect of the room, thus commanding its length. Just then the servant entered, ushering in someone; the noise from the street through the open window prevented her from hearing the announcement, and she did not turn round. But I saw a tall stiff figure, dressed in a long black coat, enter through the door, and, after looking in our direction, pause. I did not recognise the figure in the slight glance I gave it.

‘I think this must be it—yes, it is!’ said the princess, drawing out one of the photographs from the portfolio. She had a

full, agreeable voice, but with a sad chord occasionally vibrating through it, corresponding with the pathos in her face.

'See, this was our house,' she continued, pointing it out to me with her finger: 'this with the high steps and the portico. I loved that portico especially, because it reminded me a little of a house I lived in—or knew, at least, in England. This was the window of my boudoir.'

She broke off abruptly, and gave that odd half-glance over her shoulder to which I have already alluded. This time my glance followed hers. I had forgotten the presence of the gentleman who had lately been shown in, but he was there, still standing erect where he had first taken up his position. The Princess Saroni turned herself slowly toward him; one of her hands still grasping the bar of the portfolio stand. At the distance we were from him, it was impossible clearly to distinguish the features of the stranger. By this time, however, I had recognised him; it was the Rev. James Moore. How he had found his way hither I could not imagine; I suppose he saw Saroni's arrival mentioned in the papers. At all events, I felt the desirability of getting him out of the house as speedily and quietly as possible, before Saroni himself should come in.

'I know this gentleman,' I muttered in an undertone to the princess. 'He is a little deranged in the upper story. If you will allow me, I will conduct him downstairs.'

She paid no attention to me. 'Do you wish to speak to me, sir?' she said to Moore. 'Will you come this way?'

'Thank you, ma'am,' replied he, moving a few steps nearer; 'it was your husband I wanted to see; but there seemed to be something familiar in your voice, so I'

A curious change came over the Rev. James Moore. His eyebrows and eyelids quivered, and then were lifted upwards, uncovering the white of the eyeball, as is said to be the case with those who behold a spectre. His hands wavered about aimlessly, and an exaggerated trembling shook his whole body. I thought he was seized with a fit, and moved hastily towards him. But he, too, was now quite unconscious of me.

'God have mercy on me!' I heard him murmur, in a thin, pithless voice. 'I'm going mad. That's my murdered girl Ethel!'

I looked at the Princess Saroni. She had raised her hands to her head, and was pressing them against her temples. As she let them fall again, she sighed—a long, lingering sigh, like the giving up of a weary and passion-strained life. Her lips murmured something, but not audibly.

'My murdered Ethel!' quavered the old man again.

'Not murdered, father; but the murderess,' said the princess in a dry, quiet tone. 'You have hunted me down. I am not so sorry. The thought that it was to come is gone for ever. But it was I who did it, remember!' she continued quickly; 'not the prince!'

The old man clasped his shaking hands together, and broke out in a hurried, crowing sort of laugh. 'Alive, my girl! alive and sound and well, Ethel! The Lord be thanked—the Lord be praised! Never mind if you killed her—it served her right for ousting you from your rights! Ho, ho, ho, ho! And now you'll come back and live with me, Ethel, my girl. And never think I didn't love you, child! I did, I did! and you shall never hear a hard or loveless word from me again. Come, girl—come at once!'

He tried to take her hand and draw her away. But she avoided him quietly. 'It is too late, father,' she said. 'The truth is known now, and can never again be hidden. We cannot begin to be father and daughter now. I have had my way, and my love, for a year; and that is enough: and I was loved too; but it was time even that should end. Even love cannot make sin good—we have had time to find that out already.'

I do not find myself disposed to dwell upon the conclusion of this affair. But a few words of explanation may be required. Although the princess—as she still deserved to be called—took upon herself the whole responsibility of the murder, it was sufficiently established on the trial that Saroni was the really guilty one. He must have meditated it for at least two weeks. At first he had planned to elope with Ethel, and as much of the property as he could manage to get into his power; and this was probably his first proposal to her; but she rejected it indignantly. He then resolved upon murder, but without making Ethel privy to his scheme. On the contrary, he made her believe that he was going to break off his engagement with Miss Medwin; and he actually kept her in this belief up to the time when he met her on the evening of September 1 on the river brink: for the letter from Ethel which he showed me on his return from America was indeed written by her, but not until after the murder had been accomplished.

What happened on that evening will never be certainly known. It was probably somewhat as follows. Saroni left his wife in the boat, and he and Ethel met at a little distance. He then told her openly that he was married, and that his wife was there. As he

had calculated, Ethel's rage and jealousy drove her, for a time, out of her right senses. Then it was that he must have suggested the crime—doubtless as if on the impulse of the moment; whether Ethel accepted the suggestion eagerly or reluctantly, Heaven only knows; as regards the way it was done, there is reason to believe that a handkerchief saturated with chloroform was one of the instruments employed. The two women had been dressed nearly alike; and the murdered girl had on Ethel's ornaments, which Saroni had once borrowed on some pretext of having them reset differently, and had then presented to his doomed wife as a wedding-gift. Everything was therefore arranged so as to favour the supposition of suicide, which had from the first formed the mainstay of Saroni's plan. In fact, I am inclined to think that his conversations with me, as recorded in the third chapter of this story, were deliberately intended by him to mislead me on that essential point.

What remains that may have seemed ambiguous may safely be left to the reader's intelligence; who will also come to his own conclusions as to Saroni's real character, and the degree of Ethel's participation in his crime. For my own part, I think he was very much as he has been here represented—genial and simple in some ways, and diabolically subtle in others; and acute enough to use his simplicity to further his diabolism. Ethel I will not presume to judge. Her former life had been repressed and barren; her love was like the sudden flowering out of some sweet but poisonous plant; her passions, good and bad, were of exceptional intensity. What she did, she did; and no doubt she suffered, even before the end. I do not think she found in Saroni quite all that she had expected.

Saroni was, by the influence of relatives in high places, provided with the means of putting an end to his own existence in his prison cell; and he employed it. His wife was sentenced to confinement for twenty years.

JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

Max Reineke's Great Book.

If Max Reineke's suit had been accepted when he proposed for the hand of Dorothea, Judge Boser's daughter, his life might have flowed on to this day with uneventful smoothness. He might not have been a great man, famous all over the world, but he might have been a happier one than he seems to have been, judging from the few words that escaped him at the time of his death, which occurred six weeks ago. Old Judge Boser was president of the tribunal in the Grand Duchy of Kocklenberg, and he was in a position both to have portioned his daughter and to have advanced the interests of his son-in-law; but, possibly, it was by reason of his own affluence and respectability that he scouted the suit of Max Reineke, who had nothing in the world to recommend him except a handsome face and great proficiency in the arts of fencing and gymnastics. Dorothea sighed at her father's harshness. She knew that Max was the admired of all the girls in Kocklenberg. He had such lovely blue eyes and curly flaxen hair; he wore his student's cap so jauntily; he smiled with such grace; and then, as above said, he had such marvellous skill in the use of the rapier! At least a dozen brother students had had their faces gashed by him in duels; and as for feats of strength, why, Max could crack a peach-stone between his knuckles as easily as you or I crack a filbert. These are great titles to a girl's esteem; and Dorothea Boser, when she gave her heart to Max, never inquired how many thalers there might or might not be in his pockets.

So the two young people were made thoroughly wretched by Judge Boser's pride; and, while Dorothea was sent off to spend a few months with an aunt of hers in Bavaria, Max Reineke remained in Kocklenberg and addicted himself to ardent study, in order to efface his sorrow. He obtained an appointment as sub-professor of mathematics in the Gymnasium, or High School, of the Duchy, and in his leisure hours he used to frequent the library of the Grand Duke's palace, the custodian of which, Herr Schlafzimmer, was his good friend, and allowed him free run of the shelves. Unfortunately, Max Reineke had more ambition to learn than perspicacity as regards the branch of study which it best suited him to master. He read enormously, but desultorily, taking up one subject, then another, but not being able to make up his mind as to what particular kind of knowledge he could best

assimilate. He wanted to become a man of science; but the more he read, the less he seemed to learn, somehow. The pictures impressed on his mind by one day's reading vanished like dissolving views at the contact of what he perused on the day following; so that by degrees, having tired his brain by taxing it overmuch, he fell into a somnolent mood, and wasted in dreams the precious hours which he might have spent in action.

So time rolled on rather unprofitably for Max; but one day it befell that the Ducal librarian, Herr Schlafzimmer, died; and the Grand Duke, who had heard that good-looking Max Reineke was always poring over the dustiest volumes in their book-store, appointed the young man to the comfortable post which had become vacant. About six months later a great wonder startled the scientific world. From one of the greatest publishing houses in Leipsic issued an exhaustive treatise, in three volumes, on *The Transformations of Animal Nature*. It bore the name of Max Reineke on the title-page, and made that young man instantly famous amongst all the learned societies of the earth.

What had happened? Had Max, on being appointed to his librarianship, become suddenly inflated by genius? Had his mind cleared of its dreamy clouds and released his hands from the fetters of lazy hesitation? No. Max Reineke, while ferreting among some of the unexplored shelves of the Grand Duke's library, had simply come upon a manuscript which bore traces of having been indited about fifty years previously, but had no author's name. It was not entered in the catalogue, either. It was wrapped up in a calico cover, which had been sealed, and, from the thick layer of dust which encrusted this cover, it was evident that the parcel had not been disturbed for years—perhaps not since the day when it had been first laid there. How came it that a work of such value had been allowed to lie so long in obscure neglect?

Max could only conjecture that some departed *savant* had composed the treatise during the troublous period of the Napoleonic wars, when Germany was overrun with armies, and that he had carried it to the library for safety—as to a literary bank—hoping to publish it in times of peace, but that death had overtaken him before he could either give effect to his design or bequeath the fruits of his wonderful labours to a successor. Of one thing Max Reineke felt sure: the existence of this work on 'Transformation' was unknown to men of science, and most of the discoveries revealed in it were new. Whoever the unknown author was, he had been more than half a century ahead of his age.

Max had knowledge enough of his own to perceive this; and

once the idea had occurred to him of appropriating the treasure he had found, he displayed the cunning requisite to escape detection. He recopied the whole work, destroying the pages of the original as fast as he had transcribed them, and amending the style, so as to strip it of all the phraseology that was out of date. Meanwhile he was careful to mention to his friends that he was busy writing a work on 'Animal Transformation,' so that the publication of the work might not take his familiars too much by surprise.

All this scheming succeeded perfectly, and, to the amazement of the people of Kocklenberg, who had never suspected that they had a genius among them, young Reineke, who was then but twenty-six, became ranked among the intellectual giants of the world. The Grand Duke, to mark his sense of the honour thus won by a subject, conferred a decoration upon the precocious *savant*; but so many decorations came pouring in from other potentates, that soon His Serene Highness went further and made Max a Baron. By this time the author of 'Animal Transformation' had been elected a member of innumerable scientific bodies, while successive editions of his book had brought him money in heaps. But more precious to Max than titles, stars, crosses, or wealth was the prize he won in getting the hand of his dear Dorothea. Old Boser could not decline the suit of a man who was now by many cubits his social superior, and indeed he was among the first who went to pay his court to the new Baron Reineke, declaring that 'he had always augured well of him,' and so forth.

So Max and Dorothea were married amid great pomp in the chapel of the Grand Duke's palace; and then, one of the Kings of Germany having summoned the Baron to be one of his Aulic Counsellors, and to take charge of all the natural-history museums of his realm, Max left Kocklenberg, with his bride, to embark on a new career of honour. During three or four months he was supremely happy.

He could not remain so much longer; for though he might stifle the reproving voice of his conscience, by arguing that he had wronged nobody in taking the glory of a work done by a man who was dead and unknown, yet he could not evade the inconvenience of having usurped credit for more knowledge than he possessed. He was like a man who has flown to a pinnacle on borrowed wings, and who when those wings have been taken from him can neither get down nor fly higher. His native wit enabled him to talk wisely and, indeed, brilliantly on the subjects which he was believed to have mastered; but he was continually being asked to write another book, or at least to explain some of the obscure

points of his treatise in essays for scientific reviews, and this he dared not do. When he took up his pen he found it was too heavy for him, like the sword of a colossal knight in the hands of a pigmy. Try as he would to instruct himself in the science which his book contained, he could not get beyond a certain point; and as for pushing further on than his master in the course which the latter had cleared, that was out of the question. Yet it was manifest to Max Reineke, as it was to many others, that the book published in his name demanded a sequel, and that the true author of it had intended to give a sequel. So Max groaned in spirit; and in order to escape from the importunities of friends and admirers, he was fain to enwrap himself in a cold reserve, hinting vaguely that he was preparing a new work, but declining to enter into any conversation about its contents.

His character altered. He had been gay: he became sad and even morose. Happening in a spleenful moment to say something which displeased the King who was employing him, he was politely dismissed from his post; and soon afterwards the failure of a bank in which he had lodged almost all his money left him in serious pecuniary straits. Then it became a question of putting his pen to paper in order to earn bread. His beloved Dorothea—the only person to whom he always showed a kind face—came to him with tears in her eyes, and, dandling her baby, to beg that for their dear little one's sake Max would rouse himself and conquer new fields. The husband and father was shaken by this appeal. He kissed the tears from his wife's eyes; he stroked the head of the baby very gently, and looked into its face with a gaze so conscience-stricken and wistful that the child seemed almost to understand, and answered with a startled stare. Then Max, in broken tones, promised that he would do his best, and the same night he set to work.

None but himself ever knew what he suffered during the progress of the gigantic task which he had undertaken. Every faculty of his was on the strain—his brain striving to pierce through the problems that encompassed it like so many forest trees that had to be rooted up and cast down before any advance could be made—his brain was overworked, and seemed at times to be dying from exhaustion. But there was money to be won for his wife and child, and Max looked ever on to this goal when he felt his strength leave him. Whether his book was good or bad, it would bring him wealth; for a publisher had promised to pay him 10,000*l.* for a five years' copyright as soon as the complete manuscript should be placed in his hands.

Well, the book was finished, and the author laid down his pen

with an undefinable sigh—and a rather bitter smile of relief; for it had been growing plain to him for some time past that if disgrace were in store for him, he should not live long to feel it. His end was approaching. He knew from the palpitations of his heart, produced by overwrought nervous activity, that the main-spring of his organism had been tampered with past mending, and that the first emotion of any violent kind would kill him. His great consolation now was that at all events his wife and child were provided for; and as to his fame, why, if that were assailed when he was gone, his wife would not be among those who spoke against him. In *her* eyes he would always remain what he was then; and truly that was about all he cared for now. }

The money had been paid; the proofs of the book had been corrected; the great work, advertised in every newspaper of the world, was about to come out. The day arrived when it did come out—going forth from the press in thousands upon thousands of copies to the hands of innumerable impatient readers. Then Max Reineke was like the prisoner who stands at the bar and awaits the verdict of a jury—awaits it with head bowed, too; for at the hands of public opinion the guilt-stricken man expected no favourable judgment.

He had been ailing for some days past; and one evening he was wheeled out into the garden in a chair, where he sat propped by pillows. It was at the hour when the postman brought the morning papers from the big city which Max had abandoned when he retired to write his book; and both he and his wife were aware that the first reviews of the book would probably be in the papers which they were then awaiting. Max had been almost speechless for half an hour, Dorothea being seated at his feet, with the child on her lap.

Suddenly the postman appeared. The poor woman rose and rushed to the gate, to be the first bearer of the good tidings which she fondly hoped would bring back to her husband his life and health and glad looks. She almost snatched the papers from the postman's hands, and in a second she had torn the bands off. Max watched her from afar, motionless, with death mounting slowly to his eyes—like a tide at sunset. Then he heard an exulting cry ring through the air, and Dorothea came hurrying back.

'Max, dear Max!' she exclaimed as she flourished the paper, 'look! read what they say—they declare it's a greater book than the first! See, see! they all say it!'

Max looked and read. He had strength enough to do that, for

his forces returned to him for a moment in one final flow before the everlasting ebb set in. The evening shadows were gathering fast. Max took up one paper after another, glanced at them, and then sank back, while tears gushed from his eyes, trickling fast. . . . One more effort he made, and clasped his wife's hand, looking from her to the child she held.

'Dorothea, dear—I've—not—not been happy of late,' he murmured. 'Teach the child to be truthful and honest—there's no peace otherwise. And now I must thank God! A great book they said it was, eh? Well, then, I can meet the *Other One* without so much shame.'

To this day poor Dorothea does not know whom her great departed husband meant by that *Other One* to whom he alluded in his last breath.

E. C. GRENVILLE-MURRAY.

A Chant for Winter.

HAIL to the king who from Northern lands frozen,
 Leaving his ice-floes in shelter of night,
 Comes to the lands he for conquest hath chosen,
 Seeking new fields for the proof of his might.
 Out from the Northland as sailed the old Viking,
 Ever victorious, so cometh he,
 Winter the monarch, new victories seeking
 Down to the shores of the blue Southern sea.

Conqueror's march must be known by the traces
 Dire of destruction by sea and by land ;
 Dead lie the birds in the desolate places
 Where the earth stiffens at grip of his hand ;
 Stilled are the streams at the sound of winds blowing,
 Horns are the wild winds to herald the chief,
 Flames the red sunset, as hot blood were flowing,
 Waves chant their dirges on shore and on reef.

Yet hath he guerdon for such as are fearless,
 Gem and adorning for all that obey ;
 Lands he hath conquered no longer show cheerless,
 Shine in new splendour by night and by day.
 Bare were the trees, but he flings a white cloaking
 Over each bough, and with jewel of frost
 Decks what sad Autumn hath plundered, evoking
 Newly-found beauty for that they have lost ;

Touches the limbs of the strong, and they tingle,
 Warm with the glow that is born of new health ;
 Touches the hearts of the severed, who mingle
 Once more together, and poor man hath wealth.
 Hail, then, to Winter, the conqueror kindly !
 Welcome the victor who cometh to bless !
 Blame not his power, nor shrink from him blindly,—
 Christmas attends him, and done is distress.





'Warm with the glow that is born of new health.'

The Colonel.

I MET the Colonel one fine autumn evening mid-way across St. George's Channel. We were on board the 'Adriatic,' one of the marine hotels which form the White Star Fleet, and were steaming swiftly but quietly towards Queenstown. The multitude of passengers had been shaken down into their respective berths, and had had their places at the dinner-table appointed for them by the purser, a big burly good-natured fellow, who in an earlier development of being had been a Newfoundland dog. Dinner was over, and the men had come on deck, illuminating the still darkness with the ruddy points of fragrant cigars. Many of the ladies had returned to their berths whilst yet all was safe. Others had come on deck muffled up in shawls, for there was a cool breeze on the face of the water. There was no moon, nor any light save that of the stars. It was passing strange, in these first hours of an Atlantic voyage, to feel your way swiftly through the darkness. Here and there lights from passing vessels shone like stars, and with the lamps burning in the saloon there was just sufficient light to grope about the deck without stumbling up against the muffled figures in shawls.

At dinner the engrossing subject of conversation had been 'one of the richest men in the world,' who, we learned with a thrill of satisfaction, was on board this very steamer. It was distinctly and emphatically asserted that he was 'worth a pound a minute.' I don't know who first put forth this assertion, or, indeed, who made the statement in general terms that we had on board with us 'the richest man in the world.' That was the formula before dessert was put on the table. With the soup our fellow-passenger had been '*one of* the richest men in the world.' Now he had reached the highest rank, and was inapproachable by any single member of the Rothschild family. He was '*the* richest man in the world.'

I think it was in the course of dinner that the precise estimate which fixed his income at one pound a minute was reached. It was very difficult to trace the original authority, though, when the investigation had been carried back through a dozen people, the Purser was confidently named. The Purser had mentioned it when allotting seats at the table, evidently dropping the remark with intent to imply that *this* was the table at which one of the richest men in the world was to sit.

On comparing notes in the smoke-room, it was discovered that various persons, seated at divers tables, had had their complaint of undesirable situation softened by this remark. As it was clear that, how rich soever a man might be, he could sit only at one table at a time, some doubt as to the Purser's *bona fides* began to circulate. The richest man in the world might after all be a myth, part of the stock-in-trade of the exceptionally well-equipped White Star Line. Perhaps there was one of the richest men in the world for every ship, and passengers just now sailing out of Sandy Hook, and disliking the position assigned to them at the dinner table, might be deluded by this whisper that they would have for companion 'the richest man in the world—income a pound a minute.'

Only think of it! Fifteen pounds richer whilst you are swallowing your soup; ten pounds whilst plates are changed; another fifteen pounds whilst you eat the cod fish; a five-pound note whilst you are looking for an oyster in the sauce; and, to sum up, at least ninety pounds richer whilst you have been idling over your dinner, and have even incurred certain responsibilities in the matter of wine.

A feeling of gloom fell upon the smoke-room at this discovery of reckless statement on the part of the Purser. A sentiment of general distrust was generated, and on the whole the place got so uncomfortable that I left it, and went out on deck.

Watching the ghostly figures moving to and fro in the twilight of the upper deck, I noticed one that would have attracted attention wherever met. The stranger was over six feet in height. He was dressed in black clothes, save for an enormous white felt hat which covered his head. I could not then see his face, but as I had many opportunities of looking into it subsequently, I may say here that it was singularly handsome. His eyes were dark brown, looking from beneath arched eyebrows with grave, sad, questioning gaze. His complexion was olive-tinted, nose aquiline, cheeks slightly sunken. Perhaps his face was something of the Spanish cast, and in his deliberate movements, and slow grave courtesy, there was much else to call to mind the Spanish grandee.

After walking up and down two or three times, he sat down by me on the bench, and made some remark on the fineness of the night. There was nothing startling in the observation, but there was something notable in the manner in which it was uttered. The stranger spoke in a decided American accent, doling out his words as if he were literally weighing them, or were in search of a contraband monosyllable which he had reason to believe was somewhere near the tip of his tongue with design to escape. This

customary prelude led to a conversation into which the stranger threw the charm of high-bred courtesy, quaint expression, and a quite unusual wealth of original thought. He was evidently a man of birth and culture, but what was most remarkable was the curious and unadulterated poetry of his speech. He illustrated every idea with the imagery of common things. If you could imagine a little child suddenly brought to man's estate, having been to college, read everything, seen everything, and yet preserved the freshness of the child-mind, its wonderful delight in nature, and its unconventional view of all things, you might get some idea of the kind of man the stranger was.

The ice broken, he talked with a frankness and a friendliness that knew no bounds. He was evidently a surpassingly keen observer. Nothing passed within range of those dark, grave eyes that was not instantly detected—seen right through, as Mr. Scrooge saw through Marley's ghost, recognising the brass button at the back of its coat. As we sat at dinner eating and drinking, and calculating the growing income of the richest man in the world, this tall, grave stranger, speaking to no one, and none presuming to speak to him, had been studying the company, as he informed me he always did. His memory was as retentive as his eyes were keen. He told me more than ever I knew about some people sitting at the table where I dined, and with whose peculiarities I had previously thought myself pretty well acquainted.

I never heard a man talk like this one, more particularly when his interlocutor was a stranger whose face could not be seen in this solemn twilight. There was no approach to rudeness or malice in his speech. Yet he frankly discussed people, laying bare all their weaknesses and prejudices as if he were operating upon dead bodies. Moreover, there was an indescribable contrast between his unconventional speech and the evident restraint of his manner. It did not seem natural to him to speak thus slowly, weighing his monosyllables and paying out the polysyllables bit by bit, as if he were by no means sure of them.

Once, when he warmed a little with his subject—he was describing the effect of dolphins gambolling in the phosphorescent sea—I was startled to hear interpolated a horrible oath. There was no particular call for the expletive. It was not needed as an emphasis, but was just dropped in as, during his more slow enunciation, he had used an ordinary adjective. The oath having slipped out, the stranger stopped, and, bowing his head with grave courtesy, said, '*Ex-cuse*; kotation,' and then went on describing the sultry night, the still sea, and the rainbow flash of the dolphins, in words as simple as are found in the Old Testament, and with scarcely

less graphic force. He had not got far when out came another oath of the lowest and vulgarest kind, used, as in the former case, not with any intention to emphasise, but as if it were an ordinary and acceptable part of speech. Again stopping and bowing his head, the stranger said as before, with drawling delivery of the syllables, '*Ex-cuse; kotation,*' and continued in the same level grave voice. As far as I could see in the dim light, there was not the quiver of a smile on his countenance. There certainly was no laughter in his voice. He was thinking of nothing but the scene he had witnessed, and was glad to find some one who had not seen it to whom he might tell how beautiful a thing it was.

Presently the '*kotations*' became more numerous, flashing into the conversation as the dolphins' fins had burst above the sultry summer sea, though with quite a different effect. There was a considerable variety of oath, but no variance in the manner of their introduction, or of solemn formal apology which interrupted the narrative. Presently the stranger rose, and, raising his hat with stately courtesy, bade me good night and went to his berth.

It was now eleven o'clock, and the lamps were put out in the saloon. The passengers had all turned in, thankful to have got thus far on their journey in comfort. The deck was silent and tenantless, save for a solitary figure walking up and down on the port side. When the stranger left, I perceived a red light moving along the deck at the height of about six feet. As it came nearer I became conscious of a large figure looming immediately behind it, and when hailed by a hearty voice, knew that this was the Purser with a cigar in his mouth.

'Well,' said he, 'you're in luck. He has not spoken to a soul since he came on board. Sat at dinner mute as a marling-spike, and then you get him all to yourself, chatting with him by the hour, as if he had known you all his life and had named you in his will.'

'What's all this about?'

'Why, the richest man in the world! A pound a minute, sixty pounds an hour, two hundred and forty pounds a watch on deck, and the same sum per watch below!'

'Was that him?' I asked, feeling quite a new interest in my strange companion.

'That's him, and no other,' said the Purser, 'and a strange fish he is. He neither drinks nor smokes, and, until he came alongside you, didn't seem to talk. You are in luck, I tell you. Have a cigar?'

I certainly was in luck, and this was the beginning of it. I was not the rose, but I had lived near it, and here was the Purser al-

ready offering homage in the shape of a cigar—a real cigar, not one of those dried-up things we smoke in England, but a regular green one, fresh from Havannah, good for three-quarters of an hour's steady and sedative enjoyment.

I smoked it all before I went to bed, walking up and down the deck, thinking of my new friend with a pound a minute, and his oath every tenth sentence, for in the closer companionship of our protracted conversation he had gone even to this length. I saw him at breakfast the next morning, sitting bolt upright, eating prodigiously and drinking water. He recognised me with a bend of grave courtliness, which had the most remarkable effect, not only upon the guests, but upon the stewards. Everyone knew now that this taciturn stranger was the richest man in the world. He had not readily been found, because the particular table at which he sat was obscure and in ill favour. The Purser had seated him at the captain's table, as befitted his chronologically swelling affluence. But coming in at the sound of the dinner-gong, and looking round the tables, he had sat himself down there at the lower end, where the swell was greatest and the swells fewest.

But he was known now, and having recognised me, I became an object of embarrassing attentions. The steward whipped off my chop before I had fairly commenced it, protesting that it was cold and that I must have a hot one. The portion of the table before me was covered with relays of the choicest delicacies. The head steward, who had made advances towards the stranger, and had been warned off courteously, but with unmistakable decision, began to look after me. I was 'the man whom the king delighted to honour,' and Mordecai the Jew had not quite such a good time in the reign of King Ahasuerus as I had on the passage between Liverpool and Queenstown.

The dear old Colonel! I came to know him better by-and-by, and understood how these things pained and embarrassed him; how his simple nature, pure and true as gold, revolted from forms and ceremonies, and how he shrunk from the consequences which gossip brought buzzing about his ears. I call him 'the Colonel,' as other people on board called him 'the richest man in the world,' probably because he was neither. He certainly was very rich, and he had during the American War raised a ragged cavalry regiment, which he equipped and trained himself, and with which he did memorable service after an irregular fashion. To himself, and for those who would accept his style from him, he was plain John Bradshaw, a ranchman from Texas, where his flocks and herds covered the prairie for hundreds of miles.

He told me all his history in simple graphic language, that,

I am grieved to say, increasingly abounded with strange oaths. He had been over to Europe on a business enterprise, not without national interest in this country. Away in Texas the herds, ever multiplying, had become to him an embarrassment of riches. He did an enormous trade through St. Louis, and the market could not be said to be overstocked. Still, the demand lagged languid behind the supply, with the natural result of keeping down the prices. Communications had reached the Colonel from England on the part of some enterprising capitalists who wished to consider how this surplus cattle might be got over to this country, and whether the Great Eastern steamship could not be turned to account in that direction. The Colonel had at their invitation come over to England to go into the matter. But since his arrival a telegram received from Kansas had caused him to throw the whole thing up and rush back as fast as train and steamboat could take him. He had the telegram with him, carefully wrapped up in his pocket-book. It was worn with folding and refolding, and had, I had reason to know, been wet with tears. It only said :—

‘The boy is dead ; Kitty ill.’

But that was enough to shake this iron frame, and make this grave, resolute face tremble and flush as if it were a maiden’s. An infinite tenderness came into the Colonel’s voice as he spoke the word ‘Kitty.’ Kitty was his life, his light, his fullest realisation of what angels in heaven are like. Yet she was, or had been, only a poor schoolmistress, riding fifteen miles a day over the Texan prairie to teach hopeless little half-breeds, and the scarcely less improvable progeny of ranchmen, the scum of population that settled in these outskirts of civilisation.

Kitty had dropped into the Colonel’s life in the oddest possible way. He had, of course, not always been the richest man in the world, had, on the contrary, been one of the poorest and most ill-kempt of its waifs and strays. He had had a father and mother, doubtless ; but beyond this elementary fact, all was dark. He had commenced life very early as herd-boy to a ranchman. For companion he had had a lad of his own age and equal raggedness, whose name was Organ. Why Organ, he was no more able to say than was David Copperfield’s mother prepared to answer when Miss Betsy Trotwood, hearing the name of her husband’s residence, asked, ‘Why Rookery?’ One lad was Organ and the other Bradshaw, and probably, for any connection this nomenclature might have had with their parentage, it would have been just as well if the one had been Bradshaw and the other Organ. They were very smart youths ; though, so far from knowing how to read,

they were not even aware of the existence of the alphabet—a fact which in later years dawned upon the Colonel with strange, sad interest.

I don't know at what period they entered service. But the Colonel had not yet reached the mature age of twelve when it occurred to him that he was doing a great deal of work chiefly for the benefit of another man. Why should not he and Organ go into business for themselves, and set up, if not as ranchmen, then as ranchboys? They had carefully husbanded their slender incomes, and had between them sufficient to buy a few cattle. This was not much in Texas, but one advantage of having commenced young was, that they could afford to wait. They waited till their stock increased, and by the time they had begun to grow beards they were already comfortably established. They did their work with their own hands, spending long days in the saddle and caring for their herds as no hireling cares.

It was during one of those long rides that Organ fell sick. This was quite a new experience to the young ranchmen, who had never had an hour's illness during their lives. They did not quite know what it was, only grasping the fact that Organ swayed to and fro when he got up in the morning and sat in his saddle, and that he presently fell off when he stubbornly insisted on going about his business. The Colonel rigged up a tent for his comrade, got a cow-boy to look after him, and appointed him a dog as his body-guard. These arrangements scarcely fulfil the prescriptions that a European doctor might give in a bad case of fever. It was all the Colonel could do, and having done it he set out on the ride on which Organ should have accompanied him. It was strange that Organ should be struck down in this way, and should lie helpless in a tent, when he ought to be on horseback. Probably the Colonel would have sent for a doctor had there been one handy. But the next street was at least five hundred miles away, which of course limited the doctor's custom. So the Colonel made the tent all snug, left his sick comrade in charge of the cow-boy and the dog, and rode off to look after the cattle, believing that Organ would follow him on the next day.

His round took him three or four weeks, and when he came back he found the tent, the dog, and the patient in the place where he left them, only the cow-boy being missing. Externally nothing was changed, but matters inside the tent mystified the Colonel. The appearance of the little room was entirely changed. It had a new and strange neatness. The tin cup which served Organ and himself in common at breakfast, dinner, and tea, was filled with flowers, and the more graceful stems of prairie grass.

Also, there was a thing lying on the table that looked like a box, only the Colonel discovered on taking it up that it had no sides. In fact, it was a book, an article which the Colonel beheld for the first time in a pilgrimage already twenty-eight years long.

All this was odd, but it was nothing to the metamorphosis that had come over Organ. The fever had left him, and he was far advanced on the way to convalescence. Prostration of body might in some manner account for his un wonted quietness and comparative repose of manner. But beyond all that might reasonably be expected from this source, he was gentle and subdued to a bewildering degree. After much cogitation and observation, the Colonel came to the conclusion that he was mad, 'and,' he added, with a solemn gravity that gave a touch of the ludicrous to much that he said, 'I was going to tie him up.' You see, at this time all the Colonel's notions were derived from the business that engrossed his attention throughout the day. If a bull or a cow showed signs of a disordered imagination, it was lassoed and tied up till the paroxysms were over. I have not the slightest doubt that the Colonel would have tied up his unfortunate companion, with a dim notion that by-and-by he would come round as the cows did. Probably he had openly made preparations for the friendly act when the explanation was forthcoming.

Organ was mad, truly. He was madly in love. Whilst the Colonel had been away tracking stray oxen, a vision had dawned on the sight of poor Organ, the like of which he had never seen or dreamed of. When on rare occasions he had been to St. Louis on business, he had seen a few women, some in the streets dressed in gay colours, others at the liquor bars, and worse places. Outside the city he had met an occasional woman among the half-breeds or the greasers. On the whole, he had not given much attention to woman, and what measure had been devoted was not favourable to her as an institution. But whilst he lay in his lonely tent, weighed down by a strange heaviness, and consumed by a fire that burned throughout his body and parched his throat, he one day became conscious of a gentle presence and a sweet voice, both things hitherto wholly unknown to him. This was Kitty. I despair of any success in an attempt to describe Kitty, and will not rashly court failure. I know her very well, for has not the Colonel talked with me for hours, and even more frequent than the appearance of an oath in the Colonel's conversation is reference to Kitty. What Kitty said at such a time, what she did on such an occasion, and how she looked at particular junctures of the world's history, go far towards completing the sum of the Colonel's more familiar talk.

On matters of detail I was not able to gather more than the facts that Kitty had brown eyes, that she was five feet one in height, and was plump. There is not much material here, but sufficient for the well-trained imagination to construct a charming little woman. Kitty, like everyone else on the prairies save the greasers, worked for her living. Some of the older and better established ranchmen, deploring the cimmerian darkness of their own ignorance, had taken counsel together and decided that their progeny should not be in similar plight. Accordingly they rigged up a little shanty, got the children together, and then began to look out for a teacher. Kitty was forthcoming and was duly engaged, riding fifteen miles a day backwards and forwards to the school.

It was on one of these journeys that she discovered on her track the little tent with its attendant suite of dog and cow-boy. Kitty found Organ in bed in a raging fever. The cow-boy had fled affrighted by his delirium, and only the dog, tied by a stake at the door, remained to join its melancholy howl with his purposeless shouts. Kitty took in the whole situation at a glance. Here was a poor forlorn ranchman down with the fever, and no one to attend to him. Kitty's first duty was to her school, whither she presently rode off. But returning she did what was possible for the sick man, and was out very early the next morning, so that she might have time to attend to his needs, still keeping up her full time at the school. She brought with her such simple remedies as were within reach, and, with infinite care and most womanly tenderness, nursed the rough ranchman through his fever.

Organ had known nothing like this. When he was a lad, he had been kicked; when he had grown up, he had kicked others. His hand was ever ready for his revolver, and he thought no more of shooting a man (particularly a greaser) than we in the foremost ranks of time should hesitate about flicking off a troublesome fly. He had only known one law—the law of might, and here was a little woman whom he could crush with one hand taking possession of him, wrestling with the fever that had cast him down, and coming out victorious!

The fever had seemed a strange thing to Organ when it began to creep over his body, weakening his limbs, and making his head giddy. But it was quite a commonplace affair compared with the new sensation that now seized him. Brought up amid the advantages of civilisation, he would have known that he was in love. Brought up as he had been, he had never heard the word, and had not felt the slightest tremor of the mighty fact. He had never loved or been loved, and was not able to generalise from

ascertained conditions. All he knew was that the world was very bright to him, and life very sweet, when Kitty was in the tent; and that when she was gone, darkness and the dumb pain set in.

It was the Colonel who helped Organ to a solution of the mystery that possessed him. Being convinced that his comrade, though obviously demented, was not mad, the Colonel bent the full strength of his virgin mind upon this new problem, Organ having given up as hopeless the quest for a clue. One evening after Kitty had gone, as usual carrying light and life with her, the Colonel suddenly jumped up and said,—

‘Organ, you and the gel must be hitched up together.’

To do Organ justice, he instantly recognised the true solution of the difficulty. The Colonel, in his matter-of-fact way, had not only found out the nature of the secret disease that was sapping his energies, and ruining him as a ranchman, but had hit upon the only cure. The Colonel undertook to consult Kitty on the matter, Organ being too hopelessly deglutinised to take any step. Kitty fortunately saw matters in the same light, and as soon as Organ was well enough the ‘hitching up’ was happily accomplished.

It was a strange companionship for this gentle woman. Under the rough untanned cow-hide the Colonel wore for only suit, there must always have beaten the heart of a gentleman. He was a diamond of the purest water: but at this time an exceedingly rough diamond. We sometimes have cast up on the strand of our police courts little waifs and strays who, in accordance with the usual formula, have no knowledge of the meaning of an oath, never heard of God, and never conceived a picture of Heaven. This, only much worse, was the mental condition of these ranchmen. They were not many degrees removed from the *status* of the herds they tended. Even in appearance they must have been repulsive, with matted hair growing over face and head, and with skin hideous from scrupulous neglect of the use of water. Yet Kitty’s brown eyes saw through all this outward shield of abomination, and discerned the manly hearts, and (certainly, as far as the Colonel is concerned) the noble nature, which lived beneath.

She took the two big men in hand without wasteful delay. The very day after the new establishment was set up, lessons began. The Colonel had long since been tamed, and was as gentle as a child, or as a mastiff-dog, in the hands of the plump little woman with her sixty-one inches of height, and her two brown eyes. I fancy Organ did not get on so well at his lessons, the impression being gained from the circumstance that the Colonel was reticent on the point. If it had been possible for him to say that Organ

throve from an educational point of view, I should have heard all about it. But he was too loyal to his comrade and Kitty's husband to say a word to his detriment. As for the Colonel himself, his advance was simply phenomenal. He learned the alphabet in a single day, and in a week was able to read in books of two syllables. I suppose this will read like a vain imagining. But it is easy of understanding by those who might hear the affirmation from the Colonel's lips. Kitty wanted him to know how to read. That was enough. If Kitty had shown any desire that he should hang head downward, supported by his toes clinging to the parapet of the roof of the highest house in St. Louis, the Colonel would quietly have walked upstairs, got out on the roof by the attic window, and would presently, in the natural order of things, have been discovered shooting towards the pavement head first.

He brought to his new task a mind of great natural power, undimmed by use. It was a piece of white paper ready for the stylus of the teacher. Kitty taught him much more besides the alphabet. She taught him never to lie, never to steal, and, as far as possible, not to swear. These two first conditions, though strange when formulated, came easy enough to the Colonel. He was unaware of any law, human or divine, current on the Texan prairie, why a man should not lie if he pleased, or steal if he could. But Kitty said it was not to be done, and that was enough. Kitty attempted to enforce her injunctions by reference to a Big Ranchman who lived somewhere up in the sky, and had strict notions of these matters. As far as the Colonel was concerned, however, the Big Ranchman was a supererogation in argument; for if Kitty said it must not be, that was enough for him. Oaths presented more difficulties. Ranchmen swear just as a parrot might. Their everyday language is made up of oaths. It is their vernacular, and a man who went through a day's social intercourse without introducing an oath in every sentence would be regarded as in England we should of a man who talked Hindostani. He would merely be using a foreign language. The Colonel lost a good deal of flesh in wrestling with oaths. Even now, as has been seen, he is not free from domination of the habit. The hopeful thing is that he now knows an oath when he gets it between his teeth, whereas formerly he did not.

The Colonel's advances towards the ways of civilisation were slow but steady. Kitty had not lived long amongst them, when one of the herdsmen died. A year ago, a hole would have been dug, he would have been dropped in, and there an end of it. But graver thoughts had opened up in the mind of the Colonel. He was always thinking what would please Kitty, and he had heard

from her that there were certain little ceremonies at a grave which in cases like this were desirable. So the Colonel went off in search of 'a Bible-man,' much as he would have taken up his lasso and gone in search of an ox that had strayed. He found one and brought him home in triumph, doubtless after a manner that greatly perturbed the clergyman. Arrived at the grave, the Bible-man (according to the Colonel) 'put on a calico thing,' and presently knelt down with his eyes shut. This was too much for the Colonel. In the pleasant place where his lot was cast, for a man to shut his eyes within rifle-range of a fellow-creature was certain death. All the barriers that Kitty's care had raised against the flow of bad language were swept away. I cannot write down here the precise terms in which the Colonel addressed the reverend gentleman on his knees. They were strong rather than to the point. But being responsible for seeing the thing through, the Colonel whipped out his own revolver, and, standing over the kneeling figure of the reckless Bible-man, looked out, prepared to exact deadly revenge in the quarter whence he was certain a bullet would presently come. He could not conceive the possibility of a greaser's slighting the opportunity of a man on his knees with his eyes shut.

The Colonel himself was always ready for emergencies of this kind. Travelling one day on the cars on the line beyond St. Louis, he was awakened from dreams of Kitty by the appearance of a man standing before him, apparently demanding something. Without moving a muscle he watched the man, and saw his hand go round to the pocket where a ranchman usually keeps his revolver. In an instant the Colonel had his revolver out, and covering the intruder, ordered him to throw up his hands or he would fire. There is no mistake in the Colonel when he speaks, even on the smallest matter. He always means exactly what he says, and the trembling wretch, recognising this fact, promptly did as he was bid. It was some time before the Colonel's fellow-passengers could persuade him that it was only the conductor come to punch the tickets. Kitty improved the occasion when he went home and told her about it, warning him against the habit of too great readiness with his revolver.

He was always making mistakes, but Kitty, whilst putting him right, never laughed at him—not even when she sent him some miles off to the next store for a nutmeg, and he, thinking they were to be boiled for dinner, brought home half a sackful. Nor did she laugh when the Colonel, being in an hotel at St. Louis, walked right through a mirror, never having seen a looking-glass in his life, and thinking it was the next room. Kitty

tenderly bound up his wounds, and told him all about looking-glass, where it was made and how.

Never was there a better teacher nor an apter pupil. When I met the Colonel, two years had not elapsed since he was first embarrassed by the problem of Organ's madness, and now he was well dressed, gentlemanly in appearance, courteous in manner, with only this welling-up of strange oaths to mark his former condition. He had left his home in the west, with the promise of a new joy. Kitty was about to become a mother, and all the tenderness and unused stores of love in the man's nature went out to meet the little one as yet unborn. Before leaving St. Louis he had made his will, leaving the whole of his money to the child. A telegram followed him swiftly across the Atlantic, informing him that Kitty had a little boy, and that it was to be named after him. This filled the cup of his joy, and he went about his work with a light heart, filling up the intervals of his business engagement with travel throughout England, looking with grave earnest eyes into all the marvels that civilisation had wrought in a country whose superficial area was scarcely more than that covered by his own herds in Texas. Favoured by those powerful introductions at the disposal of the richest man in the world, he was even honoured by a command to visit the Queen. In connection with this, two matters of infinite satisfaction dwelt in his mind. One was, that he had not startled Her Majesty with the utterance of an oath; the other, that he had touched her hand, which seemed to him marvellously soft—'softer even than Kitty's,' he said, going back to the beginning and end of all points of comparison.

It was whilst he was in Paris that he received the telegram mentioned above—

'The boy is dead ; Kitty ill.'

His determination was taken in a moment. The business of stupendous interest on which he had crossed the Atlantic instantly became of smallest account. By quickest means he would go back, trembling with apprehension lest he might never see Kitty more. Did he ? I know not, but greatly fear. He was to have written and told me how the peril had ended. I have never had the promised letter, but, if this should meet the eye of the Colonel, he will know that the interest in him and his teacher is not dead, and that the letter would be welcome.

American papers, please copy.

H. W. LUCY.

The Reduced Dinner Party.

It is a common remark, among persons more worthy and well-meaning than absolutely brilliant, that the weather is not as it used to be, and particularly that the winters are not the winters that they remember in their childhood. The fact being, that at that period of life the making of a snow man was an event of importance and sticks in the memory; whereas at present, though they may have the opportunity of making a snow man, it passes by without notice (since they have given up the practice, or, living in Pall Mall, they find the police object to it), and hence they fancy that it does not occur. Another thing which they regard as an unparalleled phenomenon is a fog. Last Christmas day, for example, which in truth was in London much more like a Christmas Eve, and a late one, these good folks were exclaiming everywhere, 'Did you ever see such weather?' The observation was so far pertinent that there was nothing *else* to see, but as a serious assertion implying a prodigy, or as a contribution to meteorological science, the remark was of no great value. I have myself seen—or rather felt—much thicker fogs. I remember a November one, twenty years ago, in which as the night grew on 'you could not see your hand' even if it had a white kid glove on; an addition to the familiar phrase that occurs to me because I was at that time young (though never frivolous) and in the habit of wearing them.

My wife and I had just set up housekeeping, and were giving, as ill luck would have it, a little dinner on that evening. It was a party, including our two selves, of fourteen—quite a social event with us—and my wife (that is, my first wife, poor dear) was rather nervous about it. Man—selfish man—knows nothing of such anxieties; he goes to his business, or to what he calls his business, in the morning; drops in at his club in the afternoon; and comes home just in time to dress as though nothing particular was about to happen. But woman—lovely but solicitous woman—has to look after things.

At ten o'clock I started for the City, having done all that could reasonably be expected of me in looking out the wine: Pommerey Brut for Uncle Milston, who could only drink champagne as dry as himself, and even then it disagreed with him; a

more generous sort for Tiffin, the Indian Colonel, and I may add for his wife also, who took that liquor freely and looked all the better for it. Appearances, however, are illusory, and the report may be correct that assigns the Widow Clicquot's vintage as one of the causes which hurried her from society to the Elysian Fields. There was also, if I remember aright, some green Curapoa for young Hectic of the Guards, who could drink little else, poor fellow, even then, and had a tendency to confine his eating to pickled walnuts.

At 10.15 a telegram arrived from my uncle. 'The state of the weather and my own incipient bronchitis will make my appearance at your dinner-table to-night, dear Helen, of course out of the question.' The blow was a severe one, for the party had been asked to meet the old gentleman, from whom we had great (but just) expectations, and it would now be necessary to give another. Worst of all, in my wife's eyes, for the poor dear was superstitious, was that his defection made us thirteen. The situation was embarrassing, for one could scarcely ask anyone but an old friend at so short a notice. People have a notion, difficult to explain away, that they are invited to fill up a vacancy at the last moment. In Paris one could have engaged a *quatorzième*—a gentleman who makes it his business to supply such deficiencies; but we were not in Paris, but (though on such a day it was hard to say where we were) in London. A man with a grown-up family has only to add a son of his own to the dinner-table, but our offspring at that time was limited in extent and tender in years; we had but one child, aged two, and that was a girl.

My wife, however (though she had informed me she was quite 'prostrated' by the previous cares of hospitality), was equal to the emergency. She suddenly remembered the existence of Mr. Percy Litton, which it was her ordinary practice to ignore. He was a young gentleman of no particular position in the world, and was understood to gain a precarious existence by periodical literature. Some people thought him funny, but for her part she only thought him flippant. He was a diner-out—that is to say, he was glad to do so when he was asked—and had a reputation for anecdote. It was said that he wrote down the names of everyone he met at table, and also the stories he told them, so as to guard himself against repetition. I don't know about that, but I know he was wont to write down the heads of the anecdotes themselves, for he once left a list of them under one of our dining-room chairs. At such a pinch as this, however, even Mr. Litton was better than nobody; it would never do to have an empty seat, like Banquo's, and no one to take down old Lady Wallop; and it was almost certain that this gentleman would be disengaged: 'He'll jump at it,' was,

in fact, my wife's reflection. So she sat down and despatched an invitation to him on rose-coloured note-paper and in a style to match.

'My dear Mr. Litton,—I *know* you are overwhelmed with invitations, and that there is only the *faintest chance* of your being disengaged this evening. But a telegram has just arrived stating that one of our expected guests is ill. I don't say, could you fill his place—for you could fill anybody's place to admiration—but will you put us under the very great obligation of joining our little party? The long-existing friendship between my husband and yourself is my only excuse for sending you so short an invitation. Pray say "yes" by bearer.'

And she signed herself his 'very faithfully' with the *very* underlined.

As my wife expected, 'Mr. Litton had great pleasure in extricating our dinner party from the calamities incidental to the number thirteen;' and once more she had a mind at ease. I knew better than to disturb it, when I got home, by a recital of the difficulties I met with on the way; but they had been very severe. The fog in the City was like wool, and not white wool either. I came with an acquaintance on foot as far as Charing Cross, with our arms tightly interlaced and one of us looking one way and one the other, like a modern Janus, whenever we came to a crossing. A single passenger (unless he squinted) was certain to be run, or rather walked over (for everything went at a foot's pace) from one side or another. Our parting was quite pathetic, like a (midnight) farewell between two friends who never expect to see each other again; and indeed who didn't see each other even then. He plunged into the 'sightless road' for the railway station, and immediately afterwards a spectral van passed—as it seemed to me over him. I heard no shriek, but then the fog muffled every sound.

For myself, I lived near St. James's Street, scarce half a mile away, but progression was 'a mere matter of feeling,' and when you stood still you were bumped against by every passer by. The only way of self-protection was to carry your umbrella well under your arm, and when it came against anything soft, such as the eye of a human being, to exclaim, 'Now then, where are you coming to?' Before he recovered himself it was ten to one that another passenger had taken your place and received the objurgations of the victim. The plan, however, had its perils, and I was glad to feel myself gently rubbed (as though it had been a cat) by the axle of a passing omnibus bound for Piccadilly, into which I got. Though very fastidious at that date, I was not, from the circumstances of the case, under the least apprehension of being seen in

that humble vehicle. Whether anyone else was in it or not, I could not say at starting, but presently it ran against a lamp-post, and from the number of heavy bodies thrown upon my lap and legs I should conclude it had a good many passengers. In Piccadilly I found a link-boy, whom I attached to myself by the offer of a shilling (which he put in his mouth), and who honourably saw me home.

As I stood on the doorstep, and felt for the knocker, I said to myself, 'If anyone comes out to dine on such a night as this, he must have a bare larder at home.' But I stole upstairs to my dressing-room without a word, and hoped for the best; if anything happened to any of our guests in the way of casualty, I should of course deplore it; but if it must happen—and taking the average of human life (and even merit)—it would be better, perhaps, I reflected for the world (and me) that it should happen to Uncle Milston.

This consideration of course vanished from my mind on descending to the drawing-room and finding my wife quite triumphant upon the presence of mind which had secured Mr. Litton in my uncle's place. 'The people ought to be coming by this time, ought they not?' she said: 'though, upon my word, I can hardly see the clock. There must be a good deal of fog, Charley, out of doors, to have got into the house like this!'

'Well,' said I cheerfully, 'there must be less fog outside, my dear, since some of it *has* got in; but the truth is that it *is* a little thick. I think some of our guests may be rather late in consequence.'

'Why so?' inquired my wife sharply. She was an excellent housekeeper, and knew it, and nothing annoyed her so much as to have her dinner spoilt by the social idiots who think they create an impression of their own importance by coming late; whereas, the sentiment that they really provoke in every bosom is expressed by woman by the words, 'What insolence!' and by man, 'What Beasts!'

'If they knew the fog was thick, Charles, they ought to have made allowance for it and started earlier. However, here is somebody.'

I doubted it, though I heard the bell ring, but as it happened it was Litton. I knew his laugh as he came up the stairs—and, indeed, who but he would have laughed with the butler?

'Dear me,' said he, after the usual salutations, 'what a nice little dinner party we shall be, and what lots there will be to eat.'

'Indeed, Mr. Litton,' said my wife, drawing herself up, 'I hope there is always enough to eat at my house.'

'No doubt, my dear madam; but since what is enough for three can scarcely be enough for fourteen, so what is enough for fourteen must be rather too much for three. However, 'surplusage,' as your husband knows, being a city man, 'is no error.'

It was very unpleasant to my wife to have me called 'a city man,' but it was much more so to be impressed with the conviction that the guest who had done so was intoxicated.

'What do you mean, Mr. Litton,' she inquired, 'by your fourteen and three?'

Then he laughed a laugh peculiar to himself and stage demons: 'Why, my dear Mrs. Litton, is it possible you don't know what sort of a night it is out of doors? If I had not lived just round the corner, so that I had no crossing to get over, I should not have dared to come myself. I kept tapping the area railing with my umbrella like a blind man. Why, bless you, nobody will think of coming to-night; no cab will bring them.'

'Most—indeed, I believe *all*—our guests are carriage people,' observed my wife with dignity.

'Then, *their* coming is quite out of the question. I know exactly what happens in these cases. The butler comes up to say the coachman wishes to speak to his master. 'What is it, John?' (Litton was one of those dreadful persons who give imitations of other people's voice and manner.) 'Well, sir, they're not my 'osses, you know; you can do as you like with 'em; but my dooty is to tell you it's as much as their lives is worth to bring 'em out on such a night as this. They'll be poled, or lamed, or perhaps go down one of them river streets into the Thames, before we know where we are.'

'But, my dear Charles,' exclaimed my wife, turning upon me with some abruptness, 'why did you not tell me what a night it was?'

'Oh, it's a little thick, no doubt,' said I cheerfully, 'but I did not wish to alarm you. Everybody will come, you'll see, in time; perhaps we had better have the dinner put back, say for half an hour.'

'Oh, that is not a bit of good,' exclaimed Litton (who I felt sure had taken no luncheon; when he is asked out to dinner he never does); 'if your guests are to come at all, they will be here by this time even if they come at a foot pace; indeed, that is the only pace they *could* come, with the coachman walking at the horses' heads like a cheap funeral.'

As a rule, my wife objected (and quite right too) to wait for anybody, but in spite of Litton's arguments, or perhaps because of them (she was, as I have said, a little superstitious, and his allusion

to a funeral, and especially a cheap one, gave her quite a turn, and by no means in his favour), she rang the bell and ordered the feast to be postponed.

Litton looked so extremely disgusted, and indeed so hungry, that I felt compelled to offer him an apology and a glass of sherry. The latter he accepted with much alacrity.

'Would you like sherry and bitters?' said I, knowing the tastes of persons of his class; and, lest he should feel uncomfortable in taking it alone, I took one with him.

This had the effect of raising his spirits, always considerably above concert pitch, which was most unfortunate; for when one was straining one's ear (as I was) for the symptoms of an arrival, or speculating in one's mind as to what dishes had better be left out (as most suitable for the morrow) if nobody should come to eat them (as my wife was), it is difficult to appreciate the jokes even of persons of distinction, among which class our only guest could hardly be reckoned.

If Canon Cruciform and his wife had arrived, or even Colonel and Mrs. Tiffin, we should not have experienced such a sense of waste, but to think that we should have given a dinner for fourteen to the man whom we had asked in as a stopgap, was a reflection indeed calculated to depress the human mind. As to laughing at his jokes, I did my best, for after all he was my guest, but the effort deserves to be classed among the sublimest records of self-sacrifice. To see him taking my wife's arm downstairs, and myself following, despondently, like a single mourner after the Siamese Twins, must have been a trying spectacle to the waiters, who knew what was wrong as well as we did, and whose cheeks were swollen as though they had the mumps. If Litton had laughed upon the stairs (and it was a wonder he didn't), it *must* have set those men off, and they would have exploded.

The table had the appearance of a gorgeous *table d'hôte* to which all the landlord's art had failed to attract customers.

'Is it possible,' sighed my wife, looking at the flowers with pathetic regret (Uncle Milston liked flowers, and we always tried to please the old gentleman at whatever cost)—'Is it really possible that *nobody* is coming?'

'Well, there's Litton and myself,' said I, with a significant pressure of her foot, for we had all settled down at one end of the table, as ducks in a frozen lake congregate round a hole that has been cleared of ice, or as sheep huddle together in a snowstorm; 'you surely don't mean to call us nobody. And of one thing I am certain, that if he hasn't broken his neck or his leg, we shall see the Colonel. He prides himself on always keeping his appoint-

ment and never altering his mind. Don't you remember that Picnic on Box Hill, which he insisted on his wife going to, though it was a pouring wet day and there was nobody there but themselves ?'

'Just like us,' sighed my poor wife. Then suddenly, 'Come, there *is* somebody,' she exclaimed, as a knock at the door shook the very house ; 'I hope it is the Canon.'

'It sounds like it,' said Litton, 'unless it's a new kind of fog signal.'

There are some people so unhappily constituted that they will make a joke of anything, however serious.

It was not the Canon, but a telegram from him, dated apparently from the middle of Hyde Park. 'We have lost our way,' it said, 'and Heaven only knows when we shall get back. I shall wire this from the first office, which may be either at Kensington or Holborn Hill. We hope you will have no other defections.'

'A good Christian man,' cried my wife with pathos ; 'how little he knows the real state of the case.'

'And how little he cares if he only gets home,' observed Litton ; 'for my part, I call this very jolly.' (The champagne had been handed round earlier than usual, to keep up our spirits.) 'If anybody was to come now it would spoil the whole thing ; they would not be *en rapport* with us ; they would be like the wretched people who are asked after a dinner party "to look in in the evening."'

'Brute !' murmured my wife ; she thought she was talking to herself, but she wasn't.

'No, my dear, it's not Brut, it's Clicquot's Champagne,' said I hastily ; 'the dry creaming, which the Colonel likes—by Jove ! there *is* the Colonel !' We heard his commanding voice in our little hall inquiring whether anyone had come, as if he was asking for volunteers for a forlorn hope ; we also heard him, in reply to the answer that was given him, exclaim contemptuously, 'Oh, only him !'

We knew that Litton and the Colonel were acquainted, but we did not know with what reciprocal cordiality they hated one another.

'Well, I'm glad the Colonel's come,' said my wife. 'He's a V.C., is he not, Mr. Litton ?'

'If he is, it stands for Very Cantankerous,' replied that gentleman acidly ; 'he often gets cross enough, but he has never succeeded to my knowledge in getting the Victoria Cross.'

Here was a state of things ! In a party of fourteen, animosity

between two persons may pass unnoticed, but in a party of five—and Litton's tongue was like an asp's.

'I know you will be civil to any guest in my house, Mr. Litton,' murmured my wife sweetly, as the Colonel and his wife, after some delay, entered the room.

'I've got your slippers on,' exclaimed that warrior as he shook hands with me, 'and Mrs. Tiffin has got your wife's. We were wet through.'

'But you don't mean to say you walked!'

'We have walked from Waterloo Place. I think Julia's nerves are a little upset; just give her a glass of champagne, will you? Thank you, yes, I'll have one, too, though I have no nerves, thank Heaven—the fact is, our carriage and horses have gone down the steps of the Duke of York's Column. We only jumped out ourselves just in the nick of time.'

'Good gracious! But the coachman?' exclaimed my wife.

'Oh, he's all right; we left him on the first landing—it's pretty broad, you know—along with the *débris*. There were plenty of people, and we could do no good, and you know I always make a point of being in time everywhere.'

Litton held out his watch, and exhibited it to the company, as though he were a cheap-jack and wanted to sell it.

'Why, yes, that's true,' admitted the Colonel, 'we're an hour late.'

'But how did this shocking accident come to pass?' said I.

'Well, we didn't know where we were, but the coachman thought we were in Trafalgar Square; it was a spacious thoroughfare of some kind, because the carriage had ceased to run upon the pavements, and at last we bumped against something tall and stiff and with a light on it, which was not a lamp-post but a policeman with his lantern. "Now, my man," said I, "where *are* we?" "Ah, that's more than I know, sir," he answered; "I've given *that* up as a bad job these two hours; but if you'll wait here, I'll take a look round with my lantern, and when I whistles, coachman, you may drive straight for the sound."

'Well, we waited for about five minutes, and then there was a whistle and I sang out, "Drive for it, coachman, and pretty sharp," because I knew we were getting late for dinner. I don't know who whistled, but it was not the policeman, and instead of its being Trafalgar Square, it seems it was Waterloo Place; and but for somebody crying out, "Jump, jump!" and just in time, Julia and myself would have gone down the steps along with the carriage and horses.'

'But how did you find your way here on foot?' inquired my wife, with intense interest.

'Well, Julia and I felt our way along Pall Mall; my club, the Carlton, is smoother than the rest of them, you know, because of its polished pillars, so we knew when we got *there*; then presently we came upon a young person, not with a lantern, but, as I am a living sinner, with a lighted candle in her hand.'

'Like a woman in a parable,' interposed Mr. Litton.

'Like no woman that I ever saw in my life, sir,' continued the Colonel, with irritation; 'I thought at first she was a sleep-walker, but she proved very wide awake, and showed us (by her candle) St. James's Palace, which was a great point. The fog was worse there than ever, but we groped our way up the street, and presently I smelt the Devonshire Club—its smoking-room is on the ground-floor, you know—which was another landmark; and so at last we found you.'

'But what a dreadful experience for *you*, Mrs. Tiffin!' exclaimed I.

'Oh, Julia is all right,' said the Colonel cheerfully. 'Take another glass of champagne, my dear.'

'I am not all right or anything like it,' murmured Julia, partaking nevertheless of the remedy suggested to her. 'I'm all of a tremble; I could never venture out again into the fog.'

'Then sleep here,' exclaimed my wife good-naturedly; 'we have one spare bedroom, which is quite at the service of you and the Colonel. It would be quite a charity to occupy it.'

'Not I,' replied that warrior; 'I am much obliged to you, but I make it a rule never to sleep out of my own bed. Julia may do as she likes, but if I know her, she'll be frightened to death to sleep alone.'

'Well, to-night, I confess,' said Mrs. Tiffin, 'my nerves are in a sadly shattered state; now, if I could have a shake-down in the nursery along with the dear darling baby——'

'Well, you *must* object to sleeping alone, if you prefer a baby for your companion,' exclaimed the colonel derisively.

If my wife had not already made that mistake of ejaculating 'brute' in Litton's case, she would certainly have done it now in the Colonel's. As it was, she only expressed her conviction that no man had really any heart, and gave that nod of invitation to Mrs. Tiffin which is the signal with the ladies for leaving our worthless sex to themselves.

After a sparring match between the Colonel and his enemy, in which neither seemed to me to observe the rules of fair play (let alone politeness), and which lasted half an hour, we followed them upstairs.

It was twelve o'clock, though anything but 'a fine starlight night' (the old watchmen's favourite addition to their announce-

THE REDUCED DINNER PARTY.

ment of the midnight hour), and we found that Mrs. Tiffin had already retired to rest.

'Bless my soul!' cried the Colonel, 'I always make a point of being in bed by one, so I'll be off.' And off he went.

Litton had wished my wife good-night, and was standing with me in the hall previous to his own departure, watching the Colonel plunge into the fog, which closed in behind him like water behind the hand.

'He won't be in bed by one to-night,' observed our facetious friend, 'unless it is the bed of the ornamental water in St. James's Park. The fog seems worse than ever. Do you know, I really think I'll take advantage of your wife's kind offer and occupy your spare bedroom. She said it would be "quite a charity."'

Charity to a childless Colonel of large means is one thing, and charity to a denizen of Bohemia—a mere literary gipsy—is another. But I did not quite know how to refuse the man; moreover, being utterly unscrupulous, it was ten to one, if he thought himself ill-treated, that he would 'put us in a book,' which is the method this class of person generally adopt of indulging their private animosities.

'The spare room, my dear fellow,' said I, 'is quite at your service.'

'To think,' cried my wife pathetically when I told her what had happened, 'that the man we asked to prevent our being thirteen at dinner should be sleeping under our very roof!'

And even that was not the worst of it.

At about half-past two the house was aroused by a terrific battering at the front door. I opened the window, though of course I couldn't see an inch before me, to inquire who it was. It was the Colonel, who had never got out of the street at all, it seemed, but had been wandering up and down it like a blue-bottle fly between two panes of glass.

'If you'll allow me, my good friend,' he said quite humbly, 'I'll take advantage of your kind offer of that spare room, after all.'

Then I heard a door suddenly locked on the second floor, and a laugh that I knew (only more like a demon's than ever) ringing through the house. 'My dear Colonel,' said I apologetically, 'Litton has got it.'

I will not repeat the ejaculation which followed; as my wife observed (through the bed-curtains), a man who could swear like that did not deserve to lay his head upon a pillow. Nor, indeed, did he get a pillow. He slept, however, on the sofa in the back dining-room; so that though we did not have all the guests we had invited, those that did come stayed a good deal longer with us than we had expected.

Is She an Heiress?

I.

In the season Washerton-super-Mare is a lively place enough—having a Grand Hotel, as it is called, whose grandeur consists in its charges rather than in any other claims to dignity. It was here that I one day met my old schoolfellow, Napper, who had been sent out to sheep-farm in New Zealand when a mere lad, and had recently returned with a large fortune. In tender years, he had been remarkable for a certain greediness and worldly-mindedness, with a more than Caledonian thrift. He was glad to see me, and greeted me heartily. I confess I was not so rejoiced, though he deserved the moderate praise of being what is called ‘not a bad fellow.’

‘What are you doing here?’ I asked. ‘You won’t make any money here, as in New Zealand.’

‘I don’t know that,’ he said, with a knowing look. ‘Fact is, I have come on after a very charming creature, a stylish handsome girl that has quite captivated me: young and pretty too. Here’s her portrait.’

‘Well, you can afford to indulge your taste, for the owner of such gifts is generally penniless.’

‘Out again!’ he said. ‘She is an heiress—one of the wealthiest in the North. There is no mistake about the Featherstons.’

‘Featherston! I know her, though I haven’t seen her for some years; since, indeed, she was a child.’

‘You know her! how lucky!’

‘Is she alone?’

‘Yes—that is, virtually. She has a sort of lady companion with her, but, however, she don’t do any mischief. A poor hanger-on, you know, that backs one up in every way.’

‘You have been paying her attention?’

‘Oh! that was to get her to help me. I dare say she thinks it’s for herself. But it’s quite plain which one I declare to win with. But tell me, dear fellow: it’s a thoroughly genuine thing? Eh?’

‘No doubt of it.’

‘Then, wish me joy; it’s a regular conquest, my boy. Indeed, she’s done her best to bring me on. There’s only one danger. A fellow called Dashwood, I am told, is after her, and she says is coming here in a day or two. But he’ll be too late. I’ll cut him out of the fortune, and all——’





The Heiress.

'Of the charming owner of the fortune, you mean. I can't understand why *you* should care so much for money.'

'But I do,' he said. 'As for the girl, she's well enough. But so is every girl. I suppose of the girls in the world sixty per cent. are nice girls, as they call them, and for all the difference there is between them you might toss up.'

And it was to this selfish monster that my fair and interesting friend was about to give herself! What could be over her? An infatuation? Well, I was just come in time. I answered him coldly, 'I would keep those opinions to myself. They will not gain you respect.'

'Pooh!' he said contemptuously, 'you don't know the world.'

'Perhaps not. Perhaps *you* do. We shall see.'

That day at the table I saw the party all sitting together, and recognised my old-young friend, who seemed to have grown up, if the phrase could be used of so short a person, into a rather plain girl, who seemed diffident and retiring, and careless about her dress, which was decidedly shabby. It was thus amusing to see how Mr. Napper's worship of the golden calf had transformed the lady of his affections into a 'stylish' handsome girl, a title which seemed rather to apply to her companion the dependant, who deserved Mr. Napper's praises for the unflagging exertions she made to forward his suit. Indeed, the 'Lady Companion,' as I christened her, was attractive to all around her, and seemed to take the brilliancy, both moral and physical, out of the person she was attending. But I knew this was the fault of the latter.

When the dinner was over I went up and renewed my acquaintance. Miss Fetherston was delighted to see me. 'Oh, it is so pleasant to see an old face in these days.'

'Old!' I said reproachfully.

'I mean, one belonging to the old days. They were happy, very happy, were they not? I was not then burdened with these odious responsibilities. Do you know, I am sick of being an heiress?'

Glancing down at her half-mourning, which I had not noticed, I learned, what I had not heard before, of the death of poor old Featherston. We had certainly had merry days at Featherston.

She caught my look. 'You are thinking I don't look much like an heiress—more like a daily governess! That's what I want. I look on, and help cousin Flora to get married. It's a little excitement. He's a friend of yours, I see.'

'Yes,' said I, smiling, 'but he wants no help. He seemed to say you were ready to take pity on him.'

'I!—I!'

'Yes, he told me so himself.'

‘But he is devoted to Flora.’

‘No, no. In fact, from his peculiar cast of character, you—and only you—must be the person.’

‘It is curious that there should be any doubt about the matter.’

‘No! no!’ I said, laughing; ‘I know the man. You are really his flame. He told me so.’

‘Impossible!’ she said. ‘I must trust my senses. All his speeches—and they are gallant enough;—all his looks—and they are languishing enough—have been directed for weeks past to——’

‘To Miss Featherston, the *heiress*. He is one of that old and now almost extinct species, the Professional Fortune-hunter.’

She coloured.

‘Good gracious! to think of that! And yet, now that I think of it, I noticed various points that were odd. He seemed always to avoid me, to answer me shortly. But poor Flora! it will be such disappointment. He is really a good match.’

‘But I see,’ she added, casting her eyes down shyly, ‘you haven’t heard.’

‘No,’ I said.

‘About Mr. Dashwood. We have been long attached, and—and——’

‘Oh, I see; I am to congratulate——’

‘But it is a great secret. Not a word to anyone till the proper time.’

‘You may rely on me.’

‘He has very little, but I have enough and more than enough. Poor Flora. But—Mr. Napper has said some very pointed things to her.’

‘That is nothing,’ I said; ‘unfortunately, it is too common. The fact is, you may have a visit from him this evening, perhaps, to make his formal proposal—to clinch the matter, as he would call it.’

‘Then, what shall we do?’ she said.

II.

WE heard a tap at the door. Shall I confess it?—I longed to hear the interview. In the case of an honourable gentleman, it would have been mean and shabby; but really, with Napper, all was fair. There was a screen, and from behind it I listened.

He entered.

‘Oh, you!’ he said curtly, and sitting down. ‘They told me Miss Flora was here. But I may tell you as well.’

‘I know, and I will spare you. Don’t go on.’

‘Better wait till she comes in herself. Eh?’

‘But haven’t you really come to speak to me? It’s important. Think,—be sure.’

‘To you!’ he said.

‘I am sure,’ she went on, with a droll twinkle in her eyes, ‘you have been so kind and attentive, so delicate in consulting our wishes; often anticipating mine——’

‘Oh, pooh! pooh! my dear good lady. What are you talking of? It’s not to be thought of.’

‘What?’ she asked demurely.

‘Oh, you know well. It would not suit at all.’

‘What?’ again she asked.

‘Well, since you must have it, I must have money—cash—you know what that is—or, my poor girl, perhaps you don’t.’

‘I know from experience it’s a terrible thing to have the disposition—such claims, such deceit—no loving you for yourself——’

‘Well, if you haven’t got it, you know, you’re saved from all that. I’ll tell you what, though—There’s Dashwood, a fine good-looking fellow, and I have a suspicion, from something I picked up—what would you say to that?’

‘Drop what you picked up,’ she answered, in a burst of laughter. ‘I tell you what,’ added she; ‘I may give you a hint: Mr. Dashwood will not relish your interfering with him, as it is vital. And I shouldn’t be surprised if he were to do battle for his flame. But,’ she went on, ‘what a surprise! So you really wish to marry Flora! Well,—she likes you, I may tell you that—and as for money, it need not be named. Surely there is enough, more than enough, for yourself and for her.’

His manner quite changed to one of confidence. ‘Dear me! tell me about that. I was going to ask you about it. A hundred thousand?—eh! What would you say more?’

She smiled. ‘I am not going to tell you. She may have much or little.’

‘Ah! angry—jealous! I must look well before I take a leap. But I was thinking, if you were to speak to-night, and properly make my proposal——’

‘Oh, certainly,’ she said. ‘At all events, no one but must say that this is a case of real affection. The world is better than I thought it.’

‘Oh dear, yes,’ he said. ‘The poor calumniated world!—“like the world;” “the wicked world,” and all that. Why, there never was a greater mistake. However,’ he added, rising, ‘I rely on you.’

‘You shall hear to night.’

That night, then, about ten o'clock, he came to me full of glee. 'It's all right,' he said. 'Read that:—"Dear Sir,—My cousin accepts your most flattering proposal with pride and gratitude. Everyone will admire your noble and disinterested conduct."'

'Well,' I said, 'it is pleasant always to get the praise as well as the pudding.'

'Yes, there is plenty of pudding—an enormous one for a woman, and so pretty and sprightly a creature. You heard her during dinner?'

'The companion, as you call her?'

'No, she herself—the heiress,—*my* heiress now. Don't you understand?' he added impatiently.

'But what do they mean,' I asked, 'by your noble and disinterested conduct?'

'That it *is* noble and disinterested, of course. What do you mean?'

'Well,' I said, 'it is generally used as a sort of *technical* term to soothe a man who marries a girl without a shilling—meaning, of course, by a girl without a shilling, one who often has a hundred pounds or more.' After a pause I added:

'I begin to think you must have mixed up the pair.'

'I don't see how I could do that,' he answered, with some uneasiness.

Next morning, I was down at the beach after breakfast, when I noticed a very handsome man reading his newspaper on a garden seat—a new arrival. Presently came Mr. Napper from the house, and sat down beside me.

'Look there,' he said; 'did you ever see so pat a case of day-after-the-fair? He is just a few hours too late. Well, Dashwood,' he called out, as the gentleman rose and came towards us,— 'curious our all turning up here together. Seen the ladies yet?'

'Yes,' said the other carelessly, 'I heard the news too. Congratulate you, Mr. Napper. I do, indeed.'

'See,' whispered Napper, 'can't conceal his vexation—but does it very well—don't he?'

'You have won a very pretty girl indeed.'

'Yes, no mistake about that.'

'And as lively and witty as there is going.'

'Not going *now*,' he simpered, 'but gone.'

'I dare say Miss Featherston will add something in the shape of a *pourboire*.'

Mr. Napper said nothing: he was too confounded to speak. He drummed with his nails on the arm of the seat. Mr. Dashwood looked at him puzzled.

'Oh, it's all right,' he said, a little anxiously, in his turn. 'They'll see to that. She won't be quite portionless. Oh dear, no!'

I was so amused at the heiress-hunter's distress that I had to rise and saunter away. But he hastily pursued me.

'What's this? What did Dashwood mean by his "not portionless"?''

'Well, of course she's not.'

'But isn't she an heiress—a large heiress, I mean?'

'You cannot call her a *large* heiress exactly.'

'These sort of jokes are very absurd and ill-timed, and are not jokes at all. *Has she the money?*—Yes or no.'

'Nonsense! every one's not so mercenary as that. Putting such a coarse question! Would you have me go and ask her?'

'You take a fellow up so! Of course, I like her for herself. But still—can't I know for certain?'

'You must find out for yourself. Use your wits. Here is a charming girl, lively, agreeable, pretty: that ought to be wealth enough for you.'

'But if she hasn't got it!' he said in despair. 'I see it quite clearly. You all agree about it. What a fool I have been!'

'On the contrary,' I said, 'everyone must admire you for it.'

'Oh, rubbish! Of course it is so. I ought to have known it. Heiresses are never pretty. You could not expect them to have everything.'

'But doesn't she dress like an heiress?'

'Yes; there, again! the rich people never show it, and are always more or less shabby.'

'Just as Castlereagh was considered *distinguished*, among all the stars and decorations at Vienna. What will you do?'

'Oh, I have but one course—it was a mistake—I must go and tell them. It must be set right at once.'

'Mind! I don't tell you anything. I'll have no hand in sacrificing a nice girl. Take care you don't make a mistake again.'

'Leave that to me,' he said. 'Good gracious! to get into such a mess!'

Mr. Napper hurried up to Miss Featherston's room.

'I am so glad I found you,' he said to Miss Featherston No. 1—the real heiress, in short. 'I fear I have made an awful mistake. Do forgive me.'

'About what?'

'Oh, you know well enough, for it was you led me into it. Your cousin, I fear, thinks that I offered her my hand. *Don't she?*'

'Mr. Napper! what *do* you mean? No doubt of it.'

'There! I was sure of it—I said so.'

'You said so to me, I am positive. Surely you cannot mean to behave in so dis—well, so ungen—well, I mean, in *such a way*.'

'Say what you please. But it was you—you that I intended all the time.—*Recollect, you yourself thought so.* You said so—surely you will bear me witness to that. In this very room, almost on this spot, you thought I was coming to offer you my hand. Admit that.'

'Certainly I did; but then——'

'I want no more—that's enough. I now *renew* that offer. If you only knew how long I have loved in secret. I had not courage to tell what I felt! because I knew—on account of your great wealth and expectations—I might—be—considered—mercenary.' And he paused and looked at her with a most comically wistful air of interrogation, as who should say, 'I am right in this, am I not?'

She made no answer for a few moments. 'I fear,' she said at last, 'it would be impossible; but it is so sudden, you see.'

'All in good time!' he said eagerly. 'Don't distress yourself about *that*. But what presses is the mistake, the misapprehension under which your cousin, poor child, must labour. You will at least set *that* right?'

'Oh, certainly,' she said, 'with pleasure. Indeed, as you say, I *did* fancy for a time you—you were offering yourself to me.'

'Yes, tell her that; insist upon it, and I shall be for ever grateful.'

Napper himself told me all this, with many chucklings over his own cleverness. 'I know the women well,' he said. 'You'll see how she'll persuade the other. They like doing a job of that kind to a sister, putting a spoke—ha! ha!—in a sister's wheel. You'll see—the business is done; and having got off with the one, I may take my time with the other.'

I was so amazed at this deceitful craftiness and heartlessness combined—qualities for which I had not given him credit—that I could only feel a sort of repulsion to him. Miss Featherston No. 2 had to admit the excuse—and for that day at least there was seclusion and red eyes, eau-de-cologne and the other accompaniments of female distress.

Mr. Dashwood was furious when he heard the news. 'He shall have his nose pulled,' he said. 'Flora has a brother six feet high, and distinguished at athletic competitions—he will do it as soon as possible, and supplement it by a kicking.'

'We might punish him more effectually,' I said. 'I have an idea.'

'How? how?' came from Miss Featherston No. 1 and from him.

'Well, by making a yet more complete fool of him.'

'He is not far from that already. But it would be no harm, and more amusing than the kicking.'

'I mean, we could make him supremely ridiculous.'

'Do! do!' said she,—'for poor Flora's sake.'

'Agreed, then,' I said. 'We will begin at dinner.'

'But what is the plan?'

'I shan't tell; but keep your eye on *me*.'

Before dinner I went up to him, as he entered with an air of ineffable satisfaction.

'I must tell you plainly that I do not approve of your conduct,' I said.

'I know,' he said; 'you told me. But you'd do the same if you could. It requires cleverness.'

'But now I see the reason. You have made him happy. A wealthy man like yourself is the most dangerous rival for a poor man such as Dashwood is.'

'Well, he's welcome. But I don't see—— Rubbish! I didn't want to make him happy.'

'Well, if you didn't, the result is the same, for you have removed an obstacle from his path. I assure you he was trembling when your negotiations were going on. See what spirits he's in now.'

He grew troubled. 'Which of them is he after?'

'Oh, that is a secret to be known at the proper time. As for the heiress, he didn't think of that, as he was ready to marry without a penny.'

'Marry whom?'

'It's a secret, I tell you; but it has turned out admirably for him. Nothing could be better. *You* were the obstacle. And I assure you he was "peppering," as they say, all the time.' Here I saw Dashwood, and called him over. 'I have told Napper what you wish to convey to him, and how unconsciously he has served you.'

'Yes,' said Dashwood, seizing his hand and shaking it, but evidently ignorant of what was meant. 'So much obliged to you!'

'I was saying that you have taken an obstacle out of his way, and put him at his ease for life.'

Dashwood pulled my sleeve. 'I beg you will not mention that. It is a secret, recollect.'

'It's not about her,' I whispered; 'it's the other?'

Napper had suddenly grown suspicious. 'What's all this? Do you mean to say I have helped him to a good match?'

'Well——' I began.

But Dashwood again struck in, rather angrily: 'Nothing of the kind. I must beg you will not talk of this subject. I am really surprised at you.'

Napper grew more and more disturbed. Dashwood turned away.

'Do tell me,' said Napper. 'What is all this? Can it be that after all she is the one? How is it that Dashwood, a notoriously poor man, should be so delighted at my being out of his way? Which one is his? She's *not* the heiress—eh?'

'I can't say, really,' I said impatiently. 'This is a coarse way of doing things. See how *he* finds out these matters for himself. Recollect, I told you to be sure of what you were doing. But you would have your own way.'

He groaned. 'Surely anyone ought to have known that a poor daily-governess sort of creature like that could be no heiress! No doubt she assumed all that, because she thought that rich people affected that sort of thing, who wouldn't be taken in.'

'What do you propose to do?'

'Oh, go back to her at once, and set the thing right.'

'You are going to be happy once more! Besides, he has probably been beforehand with you.'

'And if he has! What! a creature without a sixpence! No, no. I know the sex pretty well.'

'But would you interfere and carry off the prize from him? It's really not fair!'

'Let him have the *other*. I give him leave, and make her a present to him. Can anything be fairer? Ah, I see,' he said jocularly. 'Perhaps you are in his pay. But it won't do, my boy. No, it won't do. No, no. Leave it to me: I'll set it straight.'

He set off boldly to see Miss Flora, as though it were a mere matter of course. He returned in about a quarter of an hour, much excited.

'Successful?' I said.

'It's nonsense,' he said. 'She tries to put me off with that daily governess of hers; says she would suit me much better—suit *her*, she means. When I press her, she says it is too late now; that I once might have gained her, but had flung her away like a flower. Isn't it annoying? Such a nice charming creature! What am I to do? Was there ever such folly?' His distress was really very droll. 'It's too late, I fear,' he went on; 'and do you know, I believe that she really takes to that fellow Dashwood—a

scheming, mercenary fellow! Surely I am worth a dozen of him, with my fine fortune!

'Well,' I said, 'the only thing for you to do, that I can see, is to persevere. Don't let her go; and, above all, *don't change again.*'

'Well, you know,' he said seriously, 'it does seem odd. But the truth is, I have never really changed, as my heart has always remained true to the one person, or perhaps to the one object.'

'I see,' I said laughing; 'the heiress:

Women come, and women go,
But cash goes on for ever.'

'Yes; but when you come to think of it, it's too ridiculous. Can't it be known plainly, and without mistake, which is the one? There's nothing to be ashamed of in having money.'

'On the contrary. Well, now, are you certain at last?'

'Oh, yes! but still——' And a shade of uneasiness came across his face.

Just at this moment I saw Dashwood and the two ladies coming out of the hotel, and walking towards us. Without the least concern, Napper advanced to meet them. Miss Flora received him haughtily, the other cordially.

'I fear,' he said, 'Miss Featherston is displeased with me, but I don't deserve it.'

'This is really intolerable,' said Dashwood with affected anger. 'These ladies' feelings are not to be played with in this style. Away with delicacy. Which of them, I ask you publicly, is the object of your aspirations?'

'Which one?' he asked.

'Oh,' I said, '*he* has only one, and has always had.'

'Ah! then I see now—that will show me. I shan't give her up for any man.'

'Hold to that,' I said.

'I'll stick on like grim death.' He turned on Dashwood. 'Come, sir,' he said, 'I am not to be intimidated. I know your motives. It is an object to you to win an heiress—to stick on like grim death. But you won't scare me off.'

'Oh, spare us!' said both ladies. 'Such a way of putting it!

'I don't object,' said he eagerly. 'And I answer without hesitation'—he did hesitate a little—'Miss Flora here. And I venture, as I have done already, to lay my face, figure, and fortune at her feet.'

'He wished for money,' said the other lady. 'He told me so.'

'Nothing shall change me,' he said. 'No sneers! I am not ashamed of loving and looking for money.'

'And you *take* me?' said Flora. 'You come back to poor me! But it will not interfere with our happiness, will it?'

He blushed knowingly. 'We'll try and get on in spite of that—*disadvantage*—ha! ha! But why poor you?'

'My dear fellow,' said Dashwood, seizing his hand, 'there is nobility in all this! And there is no mistake this time: she is yours. She consents. And now the time has come for me to reveal a little secret. The whole hotel may know it now. This *other* lady has been good enough to reward my years of devotion with her hand. She overlooks much. I have nothing—nothing to speak of—yet it makes no difference: she takes me! That's generous.'

'Yes, yes,' said the other carelessly, 'quite right. If you are content, it's all right.'

'But don't put it off in that light way. You don't see it. She could have got anyone she pleased—she had the right to choose—and she chose me. We have kept it long a secret. But the time has at last arrived when the disclosure must be made.'

'Pooh!' he said impatiently, 'there is nothing so wonderful in that. It's done every day, unfortunately. There are plenty of instances of persons without means joining their fortunes to embark in matrimony.'

'Without means!'

'Yes! If you think you are bettering yourself by undertaking to support a lady without resources——'

'Do you wish to insult her?'

'No.'

'Is it not what you are going to do yourself?'

'Nothing of the kind.'

'Thank you!' said Flora; 'you see! I told you he did not care for money—I said it all through.'

Again the unfortunate Napper became bewildered. 'I am getting tired of this joke,' he said. 'As it is understood that there is to be no mistake this time, I *do* care for money—in a sense, of course. And as this young lady is an heiress——'

'In a sense I am,' she said sweetly, putting out her hand.—'But can it be,' she added, recoiling, 'that you are mercenary after all?—that you want to withdraw *again*?'

Suddenly he started. 'Can it be after all?' Was this what was meant by her being generous and taking him without a shilling? 'Are you the heiress?' he asked, turning to No. 1. 'Who is? what is?'

A roar of laughter was the answer, and we had to turn away and laugh, and laugh again, so grave and earnest was his manner.

It was so noisy that some of the guests drew near and gathered round to enjoy the fun.

At last Dashwood spoke :—‘In answer to your practical question, I must inform you that this lady is really the heiress; and she has, as I said, pledged herself to me, who am not likely to be so weathercockish as you are, and, having secured a good wife, am not inclined to let her go.’

‘And this is true, this time?’ he said, after a pause.

We all answered in chorus—‘Yes.’

He turned and fled. Brazen as he was, he could not stand the ridicule, for the story got abroad, and that evening he packed up his things and quitted Washerton-super-Mare.

I have since learned that he has been ‘taken in,’ as it is called, by a penniless widow whom he had espoused in the certainty of her having an enormous jointure. I myself was fortunate—after a decently long period, of course, sufficient to allow the matter to ripen—was fortunate enough to secure—But I played too unimportant a part in the little adventure to presume that my fortune could be of interest to the reader.

PERCY FITZGERALD.

The Chinese Play at the Haymarket.

'I DON'T know how it is, Meenie,' said the manager gloomily, 'but this theatre don't seem to pay at all. It's a complete failure, that's what it is. We must strike out something new and original, with a total change of scenery, properties, and costume.'

It was the last night of the season at the Crown Prince's Theatre, Mayfair. The manager was an amiable young man, just beginning his career as a licensed purveyor of dramatic condiments; and though he had peppered and spiced his performances with every known form of legitimate or illegitimate stimulant, the public somehow didn't seem to see it. So here he was left at the end of the last night, surveying the darkened house from the foot-lights, and moodily summing up in his mind the grand total of the season's losses. Meenie, better known to the critical world as Miss Amina Fitz-Adilbert, was his first young lady, a lively little Irish girl, with just the faintest *soupc on* of a brogue; and if the Crown Prince's had turned out a success under his energetic management, Jack Roberts had fully made up his mind that she should share with him in future the honours of his name, at least in private life. She was an unaffected, simple little thing, with no actress's manners when off the stage; and as she had but one relative in the world, a certain brother Pat, who had run away to foreign parts unknown after the last Fenian business, she exactly suited Jack, who often expressed his noble determination of marrying 'a lone orphan.' But as things stood at present, he saw little chance of affording himself the luxury of matrimony, on a magnificent balance-sheet in which expenditure invariably managed to out-run revenue. So he stood disconsolate on the pasteboard wreck of the royal mail steamship which collided nightly in his fifth act; and looked like a sort of theatrical Marius about to immolate himself amid the ruins of a scene-painter's Carthage.

'We've tried everything, Meenie,' he went on disconsolately, 'but it doesn't seem to pay for all that. First of all we went in for sensational dramas. We put "Wicked London" on the stage: we drove a real hansom cab with a live horse in it across Waterloo Bridge; we had three murders and a desperate suicide: *you* nearly broke your neck leaping out of the fourth-floor window from the fire, when Jenkins forgot to put enough tow in the sheet to break your fall; and *I* singed my face dreadfully as the heroic

fireman going to the rescue. We had more railway accidents, powdered coachmen, live supernumeraries, and real water in that piece than in any piece that was ever put on the London boards; and what did the "Daily Irritator" say about it, Meenie, I ask you that? Eh?

'They said,' Meenie answered regretfully, 'that the play lacked incident, and that the dulness of its general mediocrity was scarcely relieved by a few occasional episodes which hardly deserved the epithet of sensational.'

'Well, then we went in for æsthetics and high art, and brought out Theophrastus Massinger Villon Snooks's "Ninon de l'Enclos." We draped the auditorium in sage-green hangings, decorated the proscenium with peacock patterns by Whistler, got Alma-Tadema to design the costumes for the classical masque, and Millais to supply us with hints on Renaissance properties, and finally half ruined ourselves over the architecture of that château with the unpronounceable name that everybody laughed at. You got yourself up so that your own mother wouldn't have known you from Ellen Terry, and I made my legs look as thin as spindles, so that I exactly resembled an eminent tragedian in the character of Hamlet: and what came of it all? What did the "Evening Stinger" remark about that play, I should like to know?'

'They observed,' said Meenie, in a tone of settled gloom, 'that the decorations were washy and tasteless; that the piece itself was insipid and weakly rendered; and that no amount of compression or silk leggings would ever reduce your calves to a truly tragic diameter.'

'Exactly so,' said the despondent manager. 'And then we went in for scenic spectacle. We produced "The Wide World: a Panorama in Five Tableaux." We laid our first act in Europe, our second in Asia, our third in Africa, our fourth in America, and our fifth in the islands of the Pacific Ocean. We hired five full-grown elephants from Wombwell's menagerie, and procured living cocoa-nut palms at an enormous expense from the Royal Gardens, Kew. We got three real Indian princes to appear on the stage in their ancestral paste diamonds; and we hired Farini's Zulus to perform their complete toilette before the eyes of the spectators, as an elevating moral illustration of the manners and customs of the South Sea Islanders. We had views, taken on the spot, of England's latest acquisition, the Rock of Raratonga. Finally, we wrecked this steamer here in a collision with a Russian ironclad, supposed to be symbolical of the frightful results of Mr Gladstone's or Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy—I'm sure I forget which: and what was the consequence? Why, the gods wanted to sing

the National Anthem, and the stalls put on their squash hats and left the theatre in a fit of the sulks.'

'The fact is,' said Meenie, 'English plays and English actors are at a discount. People are tired of them. They don't care for sensation any longer, nor for æsthetics, nor for spectacle: upon my word, their taste has become so debased and degraded that I don't believe they even care for legs. The whole world's gone mad on foreign actors and actresses. They've got Sarah Bernhardt and the Comédie Française, and they go wild with ecstasies over her; as if I couldn't make myself just as thin by a judicious course of Dr. Tanner.'

'No, you couldn't,' said Jack, looking at her plump little face with a momentary relaxation of his brow. 'Your fresh little Irish cheeks could never fall away to Sarah's pattern.' And to say the truth, Meenie was a comely little body enough, with just as much tendency to adipose deposit as at one-and-twenty makes a face look temptingly like a peach. She blushed visibly through her powder, which shows that she had no more of it than the custom of the stage imperatively demands, and went on with her parable unrestrained.

'Then there are the Yankees, with the Danites and Colonel Sellers, talking tragedy through their noses, and applauded to the echo by people who would turn up their own at them in a transpontine melodrama. But that's the way of English people now, just because they're imported direct. That comes of free-trade, you know. For my part, I'm a decided protectionist. I'd put a prohibitory tariff upon the importation of foreign live-stock, or compel them to be slaughtered at the port of entry. That's what I'd do.'

Jack merely sighed.

'Well, then there are the Dutch, again, going through their performances like wooden dolls. "Exquisite self-restraint," the newspapers say. Exquisite fiddlesticks! Do you suppose *we* couldn't restrain ourselves if we chose to walk through Hamlet like mutes at a funeral? Do you suppose *we* couldn't show "suppressed feeling" if we acted Macbeth in a couple of easy-chairs? Stuff and nonsense, all of it. People go because they want other people to think they understand Dutch, which they don't, and understand acting, which they can't see there. If we want to get on, we must go in for being Norwegians, or Russians, or Sandwich Islanders, or something of that sort; we really must.'

Jack looked up slowly and meditatively. 'Look here, Meenie,' he said seriously; 'suppose we get up a Chinese play?'

'Why, Jack, we're not Chinamen and Chinawomen. We don't look in the least like it.'

'I don't know about that,' said Jack quietly; 'your eyes are not quite the thing perhaps, but your nose is fairly well up to pattern.'

'Now, sir,' said Meenie, pouting, and turning up the somewhat *retroussé* feature in question, 'you're getting rude. My nose is a very excellent nose, as noses go. But you could never make yours into a Chinaman's. It's at least three inches too long.'

'Well, you know, Meenie, there's a man who advertises a nose machine for pushing the cartilage, or whatever you call it, into a proper shape. Suppose we get this fellow to make us nose-machines for distorting it into a Chinese pattern. You'll do well enough as you stand, with a little walnut-juice, all except the eyes; but your warmest admirer couldn't pretend that your eyes are oblique. We must find out some dodge to manage that, and then we shall be all right. We can easily hire a few real Chinamen as supernumeraries—engage Tom Fat, or get 'em over from New York, or San Francisco, or somewhere; and as for the leading characters, nobody'll ever expect them to be very Chinese-looking. Upon my word, the idea has points about it. I'll turn it over in my mind and see what we can make of it. We may start afresh next season, after all.'

The next six or eight weeks were a period of prodigious exertion on the part of Jack Roberts. At first, the notion was a mere joke; but the more he looked at it, the better he liked it. An eminent distorter of the human countenance not only showed him how to twist his nose into Mongoloid breadth and flatness, but also invented an invisible eyelid for producing the genuine Turanian almond effect, and rose with success to the further flight of gumming on a pair of undiscoverable high cheek-bones. In a few days, the whole company were so transformed that their own prompter wouldn't have known them, some allowance in the matter of noses and cheek-bones being naturally made in the case of the leading ladies, though all alike underwent a judicious course of copious walnut-juice. Jack telegraphed wildly to all parts of the globe for stray Chinamen; and when at last he picked up half-a-dozen from vessels in the Thames, it was unanimously decided that they looked far less genuinely celestial than the European members of the company. As for the play, Jack settled that very easily. 'We shall give them *George Barnwell*,' he said, with wicked audacity; 'only we shall leave out all the consonants except *n* and *g*, and call it "*Hang Chow, the Apprentice of Fa Kiang*."

It'll be easy enough to study our parts, as all we've got to do is to know our cues, and talk hocus-pocus in between as long as necessary.' Very wicked and unprincipled, no doubt, but very natural under the circumstances.

In a few weeks Jack was able to announce that the celebrated Celestial Troupe of the Mirror of Truth, specially decorated by his Majesty the Emperor of China and Brother of the Sun with the order of the Vermilion Pencil-case, would appear in London during the coming season in an original Chinese melodrama, for a limited number of nights only. Enthusiasm knew no bounds. The advent of the Chinese actors was the talk of society, of the clubs, of private life, and of the boys at the street corners. The 'Daily Irritator' had a learned article next morning on the origin, progress, and present condition of the Chinese stage, obviously produced upon the same principle as the famous essays on the metaphysics of the Celestial Empire which attracted so much attention in the columns of the 'Eatanswill Gazette.' The 'Hebdomadal Vaticinator' ventured to predict for its readers an intellectual treat such as they had not enjoyed since the appearance of Mr. Jefferson in 'Rip van Winkle'—evidently the only play at the performance of which the editor of that thoughtful and prophetic journal had ever assisted. Eminent Oriental travellers wrote to the society weeklies that they had seen the leading actress, Mee-Nee-Shang, in various well-known Chinese dramas at Peking, Nagasaki, Bangkok, and even Candahar. All of them spoke with rapture of her personal beauty, her exquisite singing, and her charmingly natural histrionic powers; and though there were some slight discrepancies as to the question of her height, her age, the colour of her hair, and the soprano or contralto quality of her voice, yet these were minor matters which faded into insignificance beside their general agreement as to the admirable faculties of the coming *prima donna*.

Applications for stalls, boxes, and seats in the dress circle poured in by the thousand. Very soon Jack became convinced that the Crown Prince's would never hold the crowds which threatened to besiege his doors, and he made a hasty arrangement for taking over the Haymarket. 'Hang Chow, the Apprentice of Fa Kiang,' was duly announced, and the play was put in rehearsal with vigour and effect.

At the beginning of the season, Jack opened the theatre with a tremendous success. Such a first night was never known in London. Duchesses intrigued for boxes, and peers called personally upon Jack to beg the favour of a chair behind the dress circle, as all the stalls were secured beforehand for a month ahead. The

free list was *really* suspended, and the pit and gallery were all transformed into reserved places at five shillings a head. Jack even thought it desirable to ensure proper ventilation by turning on a stream of pure oxygen from a patent generator in the cellars below. It was the grandest sensation of modern times. Sarah Bernhardt was nowhere, Mr. Raymond took a through ticket for California, and the Dutch players went and hanged themselves in an agony of disgrace.

The curtain lifted upon a beautiful piece of willow-plate pattern scenery in blue china. Azure trees floated airily above a cerulean cottage, while a blue pagoda stood out in the background against the sky, with all the charming disregard of perspective and the law of gravitation which so strikingly distinguishes Chinese art. The front of the stage was occupied by a blue shop, in which a youth, likewise dressed in the prevailing colour with a dash of white, was serving out blue tea in blue packages to blue supernumeraries, the genuine Chinamen of the Thames vessels. A blue lime-light played gracefully over the whole scene, and diffused a general sense of celestuality over the picture in its completeness. Applause was unbounded. *Æsthetic* ladies in sage-green hats tore them from their heads, lest the distressful contrast of hue should mar the pleasure of their refined fellow-spectators; and a well-known Pre-Raphaelite poet, holding three daffodils in his hand, fainted outright, as he afterwards expressed it, with a spasmodic excess of intensity, due to the rapturous but too swift satisfaction of a subtle life-hunger.

The youth in blue, by name Hang Chow, appeared, from the expressive acting of the celestial troupe, to be the apprentice of his aged and respectable uncle, Wang Seh, proprietor of a suburban grocery in a genteel neighbourhood of Peking. At first impressively and obviously guided by the highest moral feelings, as might be observed from the elevated nature of his gestures, and the extreme accuracy with which he weighed his tea or counted out change to his customers, his whole character underwent a visible deterioration from the moment of his becoming acquainted with Mee-Nee-Shang, the beautiful but wicked heroine of the piece. Not only did he become less careful as to the plaiting of his pigtail, but he also paid less attention to the correct counting out of his change, which led to frequent and expressive recriminations on the part of the flat-faced supernumeraries. At length, acting upon the suggestions of his evil angel, with whom he appeared about to contract a clandestine marriage, George Barn—I mean, Hang Chow—actually robbed the till of seventeen strings of cash, represented by real Chinese coins of the realm, specially

imported (from Birmingham) among the properties designed for the illustration of this great moral drama. Of course he was hunted down through the instrumentality of the Chinese police, admirably dressed in their national costume; and after an interesting trial before a Mandarin with four buttons and the Exalted Order of the Peacock's Feather, he was found guilty of larceny to the value of twenty shillings, and sentenced to death by the bastinado, the sentence being carried out, contrary to all Western precedent, *coram populo*. Meenie, whose admirable acting had drawn down floods of tears from the most callous spectators, including even the directors of a fraudulent bank, finally repented in the last scene, flung herself upon the body of her lover, and died with him, from the effect of the blows administered by one of the supernumeraries with a genuine piece of Oriental bamboo.

The curtain had risen to applause, it fell to thunders. Meenie and half the company came forward for an ovation, and were almost smothered under two cartloads of bouquets. The dramatic critic of the 'Daily Irritator' loudly declared that he had never till that night known what acting was. The poet with the daffodils asked to be permitted to present three golden blossoms with an unworthy holder of the same material to a lady who had at one sweep blotted out from his heart the memory of all European maidens. Five sculptors announced their intention of contributing busts of the Celestial Venus to the next Academy. And society generally observed that such an artistic and intellectual treat came like a delightful oasis amid the monotonous desert of English plays and English acting.

That night, as soon as the house was cleared, Jack caught Meenie in his arms, kissed her rapturously upon both cheeks, and vowed that they should be married that day fortnight. Meenie observed that she might if she liked at that moment take her pick of the unmarried peerage of England, but that on the whole she thought she preferred Jack. And so they went away well pleased with the success of their first night's attempt at heartlessly and unjustifiably gulling the susceptible British public.

Next day, both Jack and Meenie looked anxiously in the papers to see the verdict of the able and impartial critics upon their Chinese drama. All the fraternity were unanimous to a man. 'The play itself,' said the 'Irritator,' 'was perfect in its naïve yet touching moral sentiment, and in its profound knowledge of the throbbing human heart, always the same under all disguises, whether it be the frock-coat of Christendom or the graceful tunic of the Ming dynasty, in whose time the action is supposed to take place. As for the charming acting of Mee-Nee-Shang, the "Pearl of

Dazzling Light"—so an eminent Sinaist translates the lady's name for us—we have seen nothing so truthful for many years on the Western stage. It was more than Siddons, it was grander than Rachel. And yet the graceful and amiable actress "holds up the looking-glass to nature," to borrow the well-known phrase of Confucius, and really acts so that her acting is but another name for life itself. When she died in the last scene, medical authorities present imagined for a moment that the breath had really departed from her body; and Sir John McPhysic himself was seen visibly to sigh with relief when the little lady tripped before the curtain from the sides as gaily and brightly as though nothing had occurred to break the even tenor of her happy thought. It was a pleasure which we shall not often experience upon British boards.'

As for the 'Hebdomadal Vaticinator,' its language was so ecstatic as to defy transcription. 'It was not a play,' said the concluding words of the notice, 'it was not even a magnificent sermon: it was a grand and imperishable moral revelation, burnt into the very core of our nature by the searching fire of man's eloquence and woman's innocent beauty. To have heard it was better than to have read all the philosophers from Aristotle to Herbert Spencer: it was the underlying ethical principle of the universe working itself out under our eyes to the infallible detection of all shams and impostures whatsoever, with unerring truth and vividness.'

Jack and Meenie winced at that last sentence a little; but they managed to swallow it, and were happy enough in spite of the moral principle which, it seemed, was working out their ultimate confusion unperceived.

For ten nights 'Hang Chow, the Apprentice of Fa Kiang,' continued to run with unexampled and unabated success. Mee-Nee-Shang was the talk of the clubs and the *salons* of London, and her portrait appeared in all the shop windows, as well as in the next number of the 'Mayfair Gazette.' Professional beauties of Aryan type discovered themselves suddenly at a discount; while a snub-nosed almond-eyed little countess, hitherto disregarded by devotees of the reigning belles, woke up one morning and found herself famous. On the eleventh night, Jack's pride was at its zenith. Royalty had been graciously pleased to signify its intention of occupying its state box, and the whole house was ablaze, from the moment of opening the doors, with a perfect flood of diamonds and rubies. Meenie peeped with delight from behind the curtain, and saw even the stalls filled to overflowing ten minutes before the orchestra struck up its exquisite symphony for bells and triangle, entitled 'The Echoes of Nankin.'

But just at the last moment, as the curtain was on the point of rising, Jack rushed excitedly to her dressing-room, and pushing open the door without even a knock, exclaimed, in a tone of tragic distress, 'Meenie, we are lost.'

'Goodness gracious! Jack! what on earth do you mean?'

'Why, who do you suppose is in the next box to the Prince?—the Chinese Ambassador with all his suite! We shall be exposed and ruined before the eyes of all London, and His Royal Highness as well.'

Meenie burst away to the stage, with one half of her face as yet unpowdered, and took another peep from behind the curtain at the auditorium. True enough, it was just as Jack had said. There, in a private box, with smiling face and neat pigtail, sat His Excellency the Marquis Tseng in person, surrounded by half-a-dozen unquestionable Mongolians. Her first impulse was to shriek aloud, go into violent hysterics, and conclude with a fainting fit. But on second thoughts she decided to brazen it out. 'Leave it to me, Jack,' she said, with as much assurance as she could command. 'We'll go through the first act as well as we can, and then see what the Ambassador thinks of it.'

It was anxious work for Meenie, that evening's performance; but she pulled through with it somehow. She had no eyes for the audience, nor even for His Royal Highness; she played simply and solely to the Ambassador's box. Everybody in the theatre noticed the touching patriotism which made the popular actress pay far more attention to the mere diplomatic representative of her own beloved sovereign than to the heir-apparent of the British throne. 'You know, these Chinese,' said the Marchioness of Monopoly, 'are so tenderly and sentimentally attached to the paternal rule of their amiable Emperors. They still retain that pleasing feudal devotion which has unfortunately died out in Europe through the foolish influence of misguided agrarian agitators.' At any rate, Meenie hardly took her eyes off the Ambassador's face. But that impassive oriental sat through the five acts without a sign or a movement. Once he ate an ice *à la Napolitaine*, and once he addressed a few remarks to an *attaché*; but from beginning to end he watched the performance with a uniformly smiling face, unmoved to tears by the great bastinado scene, and utterly impervious even to the touching incidents of the love-making in the third act.

When the curtain fell at last, Meenie was fevered, excited, trembling from head to foot, but not hopeless. Calls of 'Mee-Nee-Shang' resounded loudly from the whole house, and even dukes stood up enthusiastically to join in the clamour. When she

went forward she noticed an ominous fact. The Ambassador was still in his place, beaming as before, but the interpreter had quitted his seat and was moving in the direction of the manager's room.

Meenie curtsayed and kow-towed in a sort of haze or swoon and managed to reel off the stage somehow with her burden of bouquets. She rushed eagerly to Jack's room, and as she reached the door she saw that her worst fears were realised. A celestial in pig-tail and tunic was standing at the door, engaged in low conversation with the manager.

Meenie entered with a swimming brain and sank into a chair. The interpreter shut the door softly, poured out a glass of sherry from Jack's decanter on the table, and held it gently to her lips. 'Whisht,' he said, beneath his breath, in the purest and most idiomatic Hibernian, 'make yourself perfectly aisy, me dear, but don't spake too loud, if you plase, for fear ye should ruin us botht.'

There was something very familiar to Meenie in the voice, which made her start suddenly. She looked up in amazement. 'What!' she cried, regardless of his warning, 'it isn't you, Pat!'

'Indade an' it is, me darlin',' Pat answered in a low tone; 'but kape it dark, if ye don't want us all to be found out togethier.'

'Not your long-lost brother?' said Jack, in hesitation. 'You're not going to perform Box and Cox in private life before my very eyes, are you?'

'The precise thing, me boy,' Pat replied, unabashed. 'Her brother that was in trouble for the last Faynian business, and run away to Calcutta. There I got a passage to China, and took up at first with the Jesuit missionaries. But marrying a nate little Chinese girl, I thought I might as well turn Mandarin, so I passed their examinations, and was appointed interpreter to the embassy. An' now I'm in London I'm in deadly fear that Mike Flaherty, who's one of the chief detectives at Scotland Yard, will find me out and recognise me, the same as they recognised that poor cricketer fellow at Leicester.'

A few minutes sufficed to clear up the business. Pat's features lent themselves as readily as Meenie's to the Chinese disguise; and he had cleverly intimated to the Ambassador that an additional interpreter in the national costume would prove more ornamental and effective than a recognised European like Dr. Macartney. Accordingly, he had assumed the style and title of the Mandarin Hwen Tshang, and had successfully passed himself off in London as a genuine Chinaman. Moreover, being gifted with Meenie's theatrical ability, he had learned to speak a certain broken English without the slightest Irish accent; and it was only in moments of emotion, like the present, that he burst out into his

native dialect. He had recognised Meenie on the stage, partly by her voice and manner, but still more by some fragments of Irish nursery rhymes, which they had both learned as children, and which Meenie had boldly interpolated into the text of the *Fantaisies de Canton*. So he had devoted all his energies to keeping up the hoax and deluding the Ambassador.

'And how did you manage to do it?' asked Jack.

'Sure I tould him,' Pat answered quietly, 'that though ye were all Chinamen, ye were acting the play in English to suit your audience. And the ould haythen was perfectly contint to belave it.'

'But suppose he says anything about it to anybody?'

'Divil a word can he spake to anybody, except through me. Make yourselves aisy about it; the Ambassador thinks it's all as right as tinpence. The thing's a magnificent success. Ye'll jest coin money, and nobody'll ever find ye out. Sure there's nobody in London understands Chinese except us at the embassy, and I'll make it all sthaight for ye there.'

Meenie rushed into his arms, and then into Jack's. 'Pat,' she said, with emotion, 'allow me to present you my future husband.'

'It's proud I am to make his acquaintance,' Pat answered promptly; 'and if he could lend me a tin-pound note for a day or two, it 'ud be a convanience.'

Three days later, Meenie became Mrs. Jack Roberts; and it was privately whispered in well-informed circles that the manager of the Chinese play had married the popular actress Mee-Nee-Shang. At least, it was known that a member of the embassy had been present at a private meeting in a Roman Catholic Chapel in Finsbury, where a priest was seen to enter, and Jack and Meenie to emerge shortly afterwards.

Of course the hoax oozed out in time, and all London was in a state of rage and despair. But Jack coolly snapped his fingers at the metropolis, for he had made a small fortune over his season's entertainment, and had accepted an offer to undertake the management of a theatre at Chicago, where he is now doing remarkably well. Of course, too, his hoax was a most wicked and unprincipled adventure, which it has given the present writer deep moral pain to be compelled to chronicle. But then, if people *will* make such fools of themselves, what is a well-meaning but weak-minded theatrical purveyor to do?

J. ARBUTHNOT WILSON.







A Proverb.

AMONG those crusts of common sense,
 Our saws and dittons, grave and gay,
 Wit's counters, Wisdom's copper pence—
 All some of us can find to pay!—
 I note, for fearless of decay,
 For universal as the sun,
 The sentence, mock at it who may,
 'Two's company, and three is none' !

Who made it! What was the offence
 That sped it on its endless way?
 Whose the obtuse impertinence?
 Came it from knights at feast or fray,
 Or bumpkins 'tumbling in the hay'?
 Was it in fury or in fun?
 Who was the first had sense to say,
 'Two's company, and three is none'?

O interlopers dull and dense,
 Should it not scatter your array,
 And teach that we would have you hence?—
 Leave Rook and Pigeon to their play!
 Leave Captain X. to Mrs. A. !
 Leave, leave the debtor to his dun,
 Jill to her Jack, the tramp to Tray!—
 'Two's company, and three is none.'

ENVOY.

Prince, should you ever stumble and stray
 Into a duo not yet done,
 Remember, though you'd like to stay :—
 'Two's company, and three is none.'

J. LIBBEL.

So Like the Prince.

I.

WHILE I was staying at Ludwigstein some three or four summers ago, the Prince arrived in his own territory, to remain a few months, for the hunting season, and brought with him a very noticeable valet—a youth of singularly fine appearance and possessed of a somewhat winning and polished manner: no one knew where he had found him.

Such was the dearth of change in Ludwigstein, that even the new valet created a sensation; indeed, so much so, that when this same valet appeared with his Prince outside the palace grounds, the people for a time looked at the valet even more than at the master.

The Prince was perhaps a little imprudent in introducing this young man into his household, valet though he was; for, to tell truth, he bore a striking resemblance to his master; but his Serene Highness was given to doing things after his own fashion, never concerning himself, or even thinking for a moment, what others might think or say. Being the greater part of his time away from home enjoying life in foreign cities of pleasure, he forgot that there was an opinion in Ludwigstein: wherefore did the folk of that little place open their eyes the wider, as is their wont when one greater looks with indifference over their heads,—not that it appeared that the likeness between master and valet had been observed by the former, though so evident to the rest of the world.

The fact is, that the Prince hated the place, and, confounding the people with it, hated them. It is a sleepy, stupid town, dusty in sunshine, and muddy after rain; its town-council, which thinks itself metropolitan, is poor and primitive, and has not yet conquered the pride it takes in handing all its revenues over to the Prince, who, on his part, well acquainted with all the modern improvements, has failed hitherto in introducing any of them into the capital. Indeed, the Serene Highness, observant of Russian maxims in these days unfavourable to Princes, did his best to withhold from them the new ideas, lest they should come to know of the great cauldron of conspiracy now simmering, and which he cordially hoped would soon boil over and scald the disaffected, each according to his deserts. For the rest, the Prince, who had

weighed these things in the general scale, hoped that all would continue to be for the best, leaving him to have his old way at home and abroad, and his subjects theirs as heretofore.

It might be fairly inferred that the people of Ludwigstein knew pretty well all about their Prince, seeing that he ruled over so small a realm, and that the distance between him and his lowest subject was by no means equal to that between the Czar of all the Russias and his serfs. But their knowledge of the Prince and his movements was very slight, and the less authentic as being gossip which had filtered from the stable and kitchen through the instrumentality of kitchen-maids and grooms; for the Prince was away the greater part of the year, and came only to the home-palace to hunt the boar.

I remember when for the first time I visited the little town in which this palace stands, how, as everything was shown to me, it was introduced with the whispered word 'princely,' just as it might be 'ducal' at Weimar, or 'royal' at Berlin: it was the princely stable, the princely farm, the princely park, the princely palace—as if the Prince himself were in the midst of them, though as little seen as his fish in the princely ponds, or his face in the princely mirrors of the château.

The royal suite had returned to Ludwigstein three days before the inhabitants had a sight of the new valet, and on this occasion he was seated behind the Prince as the carriage drove through the town to a favourite pavilion in the neighbourhood. People were struck with his resemblance to the Prince. And not they alone; for the same idea was in vogue among the lords and ladies of the court.

As time went on, it was seen by the courtiers at the château that the new valet was rapidly gaining the Prince's favour. They made a pleasantry of the dexterous way in which the new valet anticipated the wishes of his master, and saw how, in place of the menial duties of his situation, he was set to the performance of higher ones; for His Serene Highness had more than once dictated letters to him and had caused them to be issued in the valet's handwriting. Besides all this, the Prince had put into his hands a batch of accounts to examine, and had deputed him to pay out certain moneys. These doings, as if they had been contrary to court etiquette, were, for want of better, made topics of conversation between the chancellor and the mistress of the robes, and the chamberlain and the ladies-in-waiting. But, playfully as this matter was treated by them, there was something like disquietude among the courtiers, who cannot think with complacency of a favourite, even though he may belong to the domestic class.

Meantime the valet himself maintained a demeanour respectful rather than servile towards all, without distinction, as if he scarcely belonged to the household : which, from the courtier's point of view, if not impertinent, was irritating in the highest degree.

At this time Herr Harmann, the valet, liked no society so well as his own ; and when he had disposed of his other duties, he would betake himself to his master's dressing-room, and, whatever his motive may have been, was never so happy as when determining the point of how he looked in his master's clothes. It is astonishing how great a portion of his time he spent, while his master was hunting the boar, in trying on now a gold lace coat and now a wig ; for the Prince, being a little bald, possessed a wealth of perukes. On these occasions, Herr Harmann was very serious ; and when he stood before the mirror to survey himself, he would assume an elevated air, conscious of the likeness he bore to the Prince, and would say : ' This is Herr Harmann who stands outside the mirror ; but that is the Prince within it.'

Though, like an actor, he was in this way continually performing his own high part and encouraging his aspirations, he began to assure himself that he must not long remain a servant, but must take his place nearer to the Prince whom he so much resembled.

All this, however, was a secret between him and the mirror.

Nevertheless, he felt difficulty in concealing from others when among them that the Prince's cloak was on his shoulders. Meantime the Prince found him more and more useful, now entrusting him with duties which pertained rather to the steward, and now employing him in the work of a secretary, until at last he became both, to the great dissatisfaction of those who already held those offices.

In this way, while more than a year had passed, the Prince had as usual been on visits to other courts, and, in the character of the foreign count, had visited Paris and London, taking with him a portion of his suite and the invaluable Harmann.

The latter during the travels had shown a new character ; he was a perfect linguist, and the effectiveness with which he made use of his talent was strikingly exhibited in Paris, at the Hôtel des Grands Seigneurs, where, discussing an important overcharge in the bill, he entered into the matter with the manager of the hotel in the Prince's presence, with so much fluency and tact as to lead to a considerable reduction in the charges.

One afternoon the court was amazed at learning that Herr Harmann had been appointed the Prince's secretary and had been entrusted with the management of the royal estates, a large part of which was the public revenue. When the chamberlain whis-

pered the fact to his brother-courtiers, the announcement was received superciliously; but the ladies were more indignant. Fortunately for the new secretary, he was on the point of departing on a financial mission for the Prince, and so avoided the resentment that awaited him throughout the household.

Now that such a change had been made in his position, Herr Harmann naturally came into more familiar contact with his master. Among his manifold duties, it was a part of the morning's business to retail the latest news to the Prince when the latter was disposed to listen, which led Herr Harmann to make an assiduous study of the journals.

'There has been an attempt to assassinate the Grand Duke of Saxe-Waldeck, Monseigneur,' he said one morning, as His Serene Highness entered the library.

'Thou loving God!' said the Prince; 'why, the Saxe-Waldecks have been six hundred years on the throne!'

'Fortunately the assassin entirely failed, wounding only some of the attendants, your Highness,' said Harmann.

'Thou loving God!' said the Prince; 'the man who attempts the life of a ruler is worse than a sovereign who cuts to pieces a whole nation.'

Herr Harmann was so elated at becoming the Prince's secretary that he began to spend money like a minister; he became extravagant though he tried to hide it, but none could fail to perceive that his dress was most costly.

One day, when the Prince was out hunting, Herr Harmann strolled into the town, and, as he passed the barracks, to his surprise the guard presented arms. He did not show his astonishment, but returned a salute. He had been mistaken for the Prince, a circumstance which suggested to him how easily he might play a royal part, bearing as he did his prince's likeness on his face. On a similar opportunity he paid a visit to the market-place, and on his appearance there the busy throng suspended its bargainings, all whispering, 'The Prince, the Prince!'

All these impressions accompanied him on a mission to Paris; they were not to be easily forgotten.

It was not known at the court until after the secretary had left that the Prince had made him Herr von Harmann, and decorated him with the order and riband of Saint Hermann; the secretary not only made the most of this on his travels, but even insinuated that he was travelling *incognito*, as though he were actually the Prince that he would like to have been.

Herr von Harmann's mission to Paris was soon completed, but not without showing him how easy a matter it would be to person-

ate the Prince for whom he was mistaken by more than one person in high places; particularly when, to render the resemblance more striking, he donned the Prince's wig, with which he had provided himself, and wore a dress after the fashion of that which His Serene Highness had worn on his travels. This mistaken identity put new ideas into his head: he loved pleasure and independence; the servility necessary to be observed at court was irksome to him; he had gambled and lost money, and, to crown all, he had left Ludwigstein deeply involved in debt. Taking all these things into his consideration, he was not long in determining to visit London and there do a stroke of business on his own account

II.

THE London season was at its full. The streets were crammed, and, though August had set in, the hotels were crowded with visitors. But while most people were longing for the country, there was one, Herr von Harmann, who, to his extreme delight, was paying a new visit to this metropolis, his face, already bronzed, presenting a contrast to the over-worked inhabitants who were becoming more and more bleached through the dissipations of the town. The Prince's secretary had arrived *en grand seigneur* at Ling's Hotel, where he stayed in that strict incognito which is generally assumed to conceal a higher rank, but in his case to hide a lower one.

There was a resort, in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, for foreigners also somewhat incognito, but in an unfavourable sense, and this was called the 'Hôtel des Châteaux en Espagne,' where the new arrival at Ling's Hotel was speedily buzzed about. The Prince of Ludwigstein was in London! The *habitués* of this place met as usual in a back parlour allotted to their special use, discussed the questions nearest their hearts with their usual fervour, drank their Lager-Bier, ate their sauer-kraut and schinken. They too had the tired look as of a gay season, but it was in them due to untiring ardour in a luckless cause. It was a motley company. Men of all nationalities, but with one aim—the downfall of kings. The conspirators numbered between fifteen and twenty, and sometimes more when foreign members arrived on some mission of moment. The conversation was always noisy when unimportant, but on occasions when news of uncommon interest reached them, their debates were confined to impassioned whispers, and the president had no easy task. In the midst of all this tumult, if the hissing of snakes can be called such, how little, if

at all, any one of these anarchists saw their own meeting as symbolising the principles of anarchy which governed them.

The president was a Monsieur Lucien Raquonart, a Genevese of gaunt and bony aspect; he had a massive countenance, which being beardless, and surmounted by black curly hair, gave free scope to the expression of eyes dark, fierce, and rebellious. On his right was a little spare man who looked as if society had not dropped him without giving him a farewell squeeze; everything about him was pinched, and he quivered as with a chilly recollection of that last *poignée de main*; but, little as he was, he seemed full to choking of some great resentment. He had a small grey beard; his eyes were rat-like, and busied themselves in taking note of the proceedings, now and then looking up at the door as if he had had more than one unequal contest with a policeman.

In front, grouped round a number of little tables, were the several members of the Association. All these were occupied in earnest discussion, and only ceased talking the minute before Monsieur Raquonart, or some other of the company, 'had the word.' The president had risen to speak, and the little spare man claimed silence by repeatedly bringing a heavy letter-weight sharply down upon his desk, as though he were putting conspiracy up to auction. The chattering came to an end, though gesticulation for a time continued. The president then began to review the progress recently made by the Association, dwelling with Nihilistic triumph on its late successes in Little Russia, Germany, and Spain; after much treason, concluding his discourse by painting the future enterprises of the Association in red colours, and then the Republic!

As his speech ended, of course there was a burst of applause. The president did not sit down on this recognition of his eloquence, but, passing his long fingers through his hair, he bent forward and said in suppressed tones:—

'Citizens, I have not done yet. The words I have just spoken were an essential preliminary to this evening's business. I have a matter of the utmost importance to bring before you—a matter which must be gone into and decided upon without delay. I have this afternoon received special information from our agent Darjaux that the miscreant, Ludwig of Ludwigstein, is in this capital. He was seen to-day at Waring's, the bankers, negotiating a loan for his own private uses. He is staying at Ling's Hotel. Citizens,' said Monsieur Raquonart, bending forward and bringing his open hand sideways down on the table, as though improvising a guillotine,—'Citizens, there must be no half-measures. I propose,

therefore, that we go through the forms that all of us have given allegiance to, and to-morrow, at an opportune time and an opportune place, another triumph be added to the triumphs of history.'

Upon this the company rose and cried in an undertone: 'Vive la Commune! Vive le Socialisme! Vive l'Internationale!' Then the little spare man got down from his seat, went up to a closet, unlocked it and took out a square box. The lights were lowered, leaving the room almost in darkness. The box was handed round and the members, one by one, took out the lots. When all had done this, including the President and his neighbour, the lights were raised; they seemed to bring a new expression to every face except Raquonart's, over whose features the shadow of a moment before still seemed to linger; immediately after, however, it was succeeded by a light of its own; his teeth glittered as he almost hissed: 'A la bonne heure!'

On the following day the metropolis was thrown into a state of consternation. An event happened which made every one ask every one else if he had heard it, which made newspaper reporters run and write, and news-boys cry with the voices of men; the town seemed short of breath.

At about half-past seven in the evening, just as it was getting dusk, and people were driving home from the Row to dinner, a man suddenly vaulted into the middle of the road in that quieter part of the park near Kensington, and, holding a pistol in his hand, discharged it at the occupant of an open carriage which was then passing. The reporters said that the victim was no less a personage than His Serene Highness Prince Ludwig von Ludwigstein. As is usual in London, it was not long before a small crowd of persons collected round the vehicle, not in time, however, to assist in the arrest of the assassin, who had made his escape through the trees. As the servants and some of the crowd pressed forward to lend their assistance, they found that the occupant of the carriage had been badly shot in the face.

The authorities set the usual enquiries on foot, having a clue to the culprit's identity in the evidence given by the footman, who described him as a man with black hair, fierce dark eyes, and a white and beardless face.

That night His Serene Highness Prince Ludwig of Ludwigstein slept in royal repose in his Schloss at Ludwigstein; wherefore Monsieur Lucien Raquonart and his confrères had not added a new triumph to the triumphs of history.

Poor Herr von Harmann recovered, but with the loss of all that resemblance to the Prince which had contributed so largely to his happiness and his misfortune.

The Transactions of the Cato Club.

I.

AN old-fashioned London street, somewhat gaunt and gloomy of aspect, ill-paved and badly lighted. As yet oil lamps have not given place to gas; the century is still in its teens; the Prince Regent fills the throne, whence mental infirmity has driven his revered sire George *le Bien-aimé*.

‘Twelve o’clock, and a frosty night.’

So proclaims a watchman of advanced age, clad in a many-caped coat, carrying a lantern and a rattle. He repeats the announcement at intervals, as he passes along. His slowly-moving form is soon merged and lost in the darkness; but his voice, echoing and re-echoing about the deserted streets, long continues audible.

A hackney-coach stops; two gentlemen alight. They pay the driver liberally, and dismiss him. They pause for a moment irresolutely.

‘This is our way,’ says one to the other. ‘We are late; it is already midnight. Let us quicken our steps.’

They draw their long cloaks closely around them, for they are meeting a bitter cold wind. As they pass beneath the feeble gleam of a projecting lamp it can be seen that the one man is some years older than the other, of taller figure and larger frame.

‘’Tis pernicious weather,’ observes the younger of the two, in rather peevish tones.

‘What is the weather to us, in our mood and with what we have before us?’ asks the other scornfully.

‘The weather is a trifle; that may be admitted—what then? Life is made up of trifles. Misery is compounded of many ingredients. The sum may be important; but of what small figures it consists!’

They pause before the carved portico of a red-brick house. Much ornate iron-work flourishes about the entrance, with extinguishers for the use of the bearers of links.

‘One moment, Vane,’ says the elder man, with a certain solemnity of manner. ‘It is not yet too late; if your mind is not wholly made up, or if you have found reason to abandon opinions perhaps too hastily adopted——’

‘My mind is quite made up,’ interrupts the other.

‘You are really determined?’

‘Most determined.’

‘Think yet a moment. You are young; life may yet have much happiness in store for you.’

‘I have thought, and I have decided.’

‘You understand, Vane? Who enters here, leaves Hope behind.’

‘I understand, Feverell. Though it were the Cave of the Giant Despair I should enter.’

‘It *is* the Home of Despair, for that matter. You will allow that I have warned you?’

‘Without doubt. Believe me, I am fully sensible of the kindness and consideration you have shown me in the matter.’

‘And it *is* to be?’

‘It must be. It shall be.’

‘We will enter, then.’

And he taps lightly at the door. It is silently opened by a powdered footman in a dark livery. They deliver to him their cloaks, and appear in the most rigorous evening dress of the time. Their coats and small-clothes are of the finest black kersymere, their broad stiff cravats are tied accurately round very erect sharp-edged collars; their open waistcoats display profusely frilled shirt-fronts; their wrists are daintily ruffled; they wear knee and shoe buckles, and black silk stockings; they carry dress swords by their sides, and cocked hats crushed beneath their arms.

They mount a broad but dimly lighted staircase, and enter presently a spacious and handsome chamber upon the first floor.

II.

A HUM of low-voiced conversation. Groups of gentlemen, all in strict full dress, occupy the room. There is little laughter; but no air of gloom oppresses the company. The tone of refined society prevails: all is calmness, sobriety, undemonstrativeness.

‘Who is the nobleman with the star and the blue ribbon?’ Mr. Vane whispers in the ear of Mr. Feverell.

‘That is Lord Melgrave. He is for the time our president in right both of his age and of his rank. He is not really so old as he looks; but it is understood that he is ruined alike in health and in fortune. Altogether, he has suffered severely. He may well sigh for relief and release. No word of repining ever escapes him however. He bears himself always gallantly and gracefully: a most engaging, amiable, and accomplished nobleman; a very

delightful companion and steadfast friend. The world will miss him seriously. But see, he advances to greet us.'

Mr. Feverell presents his friend Mr. Vane to Lord Melgrave.

'A new member?' says Lord Melgrave. 'I bid you welcome, sir, to the Cato Club. I am pleased to see you. You will pardon me if I say that you are young to desire to enter our ranks. But youth feels all things acutely, even that *tedium vitæ* perhaps which might seem to be the peculiar possession of age. I am old and ailing. I have undergone much; it need surprise no one that I am here. I should have escaped my troubles long since had such a way of escape seemed open to me. I looked and found none. The fault was mine, without doubt. There is always a way open if we will but take it; and it needs no great wit to discover it. For you—we do not seek to be informed of your motives in joining us. We abstain from inquiry on that head: that is the etiquette of our society. It is sufficient for us that you are here. Mr. Feverell has of course explained to you the nature of our constitution, the objects of our association? Rules and regulations we can scarcely be said to possess. No oath or solemn compact binds us together. We do not affect the forms and ceremonies, the vulgar mummeries and juggleries of so-called secret tribunals and fraternities. We are simply an assembly of gentlemen. Our word of honour is pledged in the matter. What more is necessary? We are agreed not to betray confidence, to be true to the club and to each other until death. Surely it is sufficient that an honourable understanding in that respect exists amongst us! After all, it is but for a little while we are here. Time soon releases us from our obligations.'

His lordship spoke in calmly-measured tones, with much graceful courtesy of manner. As he talked, he toyed with a superb snuff-box decked with diamonds, tapping its lid with his thin white fingers, and daintily lifting a pinch of its contents to his nose now and then. He owned a very lined and pallid face, his eyes wore a curious glassy look, he was of an attenuated figure, and his limbs trembled somewhat as he moved about the room. With a bow he quitted the two gentlemen and addressed himself to other members of the society.

Mr. Vane, behind his cocked hat, whispered to Mr. Feverell: 'I fear his lordship is not long for this world.'

'Who is?' demanded Mr. Feverell quickly. 'And why should you fear it? There can be no doubt upon the subject, seeing where we are. But you spoke, of course, without thinking.'

They approached the fireplace. Upon the massive chimney-piece of black marble stood a large bronze clock, supporting a

statuette of classical design: a draped figure of a man, noble of pose, severe of expression, with large grandly-shaped features.

Mr. Feverell explained to his friend: 'This represents, after the best authorities, the statesman and philosopher we view as in some measure the patron, if not the absolute founder, of our society, and whose name we have thought it not unbecoming in us to assume—Marcus Portius Cato, surnamed Uticensis from the place of his death.'

'I have seen Mr. Kemble play the part,' said Mr. Vane simply. 'I was much impressed by his performance. Addison's tragedy is, I think, a very noble production.'

'I need hardly say the work is held in esteem by this society.'

'The scene of Cato's death is very powerful in representation.'

'True. He does not stab himself *coram populo*, you remember. He respects too much the prescriptions of the classic theatre. Behind the scenes he inflicts upon himself his death wound, and then, reclining in his chair, he is brought on to die. We owe much to Cato and to the example he has left us, although here, perhaps, we bear in mind less the Cato of Plutarch and of Fact than the Cato of Addison and the Drama: the Cato who discovered that the Bane and Antidote were both before him; the Bane being Life, the Antidote Death. But I think supper is about to be served. You will understand that we are not absolute Stoics. We condescend to eat and drink, and recognise that the table offers certain pleasures, albeit to-morrow we die.'

'What is the number of the company?' inquired Mr. Vane in a low tone.

'We usually contrive that it shall be thirteen.'

'An ominous number.'

'Say rather an appropriate number.'

III.

FOLDING doors were thrown open. Lord Melgrave led the way into an adjoining chamber, where a liberal entertainment was provided. The table, lighted with many wax candles, gleamed with plate. In the centre stood a gilded vase of antique pattern, filled with flowers, which but half concealed a singular object rising from their midst—a human skull, its surface so white and polished that it bore the look of ivory. Two bronze vases of minor size also ornamented the table, but these were empty.

'A death's head at a feast!' muttered Mr. Vane.

'We scarcely need that *memento mori*,' said Mr. Feverell.

'It is not in the best taste, perhaps, but the club rarely errs in such matters; and it is viewed as a sort of symbol of the society.'

The chair was taken by Lord Melgrave, who remained standing, however, until all had found seats. An elegant supper was then served. Few ate with much appetite, albeit the dishes were of the most dainty and tempting sort. Of the wines and liqueurs, handed round with frequency by the liveried attendants, there was considerable consumption. Gradually the conversation quickened and gained in tone. Constraint was wearing away; the spirits of the company steadily rose. It cannot be said, however, that anything like merriment or sprightliness prevailed.

'May I know who is at the table?' asked Mr. Vane.

'I do not know all,' replied his friend, looking round him. 'I note one or two strange faces. They are probably, like yourself, new members. In a society like this there is, of course, constant change. The old members depart as the new enter. No man can count upon long continuance in the club, though there have been curious instances of longevity amongst us. That is entirely a matter of chance. The gentleman with the weak eyes immediately opposite to you is a poet of some fame; he maintains his last epic to be quite the noblest of his works. That is not a general opinion. He has come to the conclusion, therefore, that life is a vain and a wearisome, really an insufferable thing. Lower down sits a man with a bronzed face. He is a great traveller. He has travelled until he can travel no more. There is nowhere left for him to travel to. He has exhausted worlds, and cannot create new. He cannot rest in life—he seeks rest out of it, therefore, in that undiscovered country from which travellers do not usually return. Beside him there is a gallant soldier who has been brought face to face with death very often, and yet is not content. He would better the acquaintance. Need I describe others? The songs may differ, but their burthen is the same. We have amongst us a lover, a gambler, a priest, a physician, and a dandy who believes Wertherism is a fashion and that he is bound to be in it. And then there is the eminent advocate—I may even mention his name—Mr. Serjeant Fell—the distinguished prosecutor of so many wretched criminals; he, it seems, is seeking now the end to which he has been wont to hurry others. Let us have another glass of wine.'

'And you, Feverell, why are you here? May I ask so much?'

'I am poor and I am proud—I owe more than I can ever pay. Are you answered? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I inherited a noble name, and have done nothing worthy of it. If I

live, I shall but dishonour it. That is my story in the fewest possible words. A glass of wine, I say.'

'Your health, Feverell.'

'Hush! are you mad? We don't drink healths here. And now confidence for confidence. You have not told me clearly why you wished to join this Cato Club.'

'Because I am a coward,' said Vane abruptly.

'We are all cowards, for that matter,' muttered Feverell.

'The woman I loved—whom I love still—has been grossly and cruelly insulted. I have not dared to challenge the offender. He goes unpunished, proud of his infamy.'

'What is the explanation?'

'He is my own father. She knows nothing of our relationship. How can I tell her of it? I must hold my tongue. She believes me a miserable poltroon, and drives me from her presence. It is more than I can bear. If I lived, I should kill him. It is better for me to be here.'

'I have done you some injustice, Vane. There is more reason on your side than I believed possible. But, after all, to bring a man here, reason is not really required. Weak motives often urge men to act strongly. But—hush! our President is speaking. He is proposing a toast. We propose toasts, though we may not drink healths.'

IV.

LORD MELGRAVE, his face of a ghastly pallor, had risen from his chair. His white lips were seen to move, but for the moment no sound escaped them.

'The wine is telling upon him,' whispered Mr. Vane. The wine, indeed, had circulated very freely.

'It is not that,' said Mr. Feverell, in a subdued tone. 'His lordship is known to be a Hedonist. He is experienced in the pleasures and the penalties of opium-eating. He has employed the curative properties of the drug in relation to the cruel derangements and distresses of his health, both mental and physical. He has sought opium as an anodyne, a narcotic, a stimulant. I am amazed that he has not yet resorted to it as a poison. But of course that may come. Hush!'

'Gentlemen,' his lordship was heard to say, 'I submit to you one of our well-known toasts: "The Dagger and the Bowl."'

Certain of the wax candles were extinguished. A flaming bowl of punch was brought into the room. The flaring and the

flickering threw grotesque patches of light and shadow upon the faces of the company. The effect was weird and grim enough.

'Gentlemen,' said his lordship, as he rose again presently, 'I will ask you to charge your glasses that we may drink to the memory of our departed members.'

Some little confusion here arose at the end of the table. One of the company seemed anxious to deliver some remarks upon the occasion. It was with difficulty he was restrained by those about him, who convinced him at last, however, that a more convenient opportunity for speech would be afforded him at a later period. The toast was received and drunk not silently or solemnly, but with a festive air, gaily and merrily, although the manner of the company was now rather feverish and unhealthy. A buzz of conversation ensued, to be hurriedly silenced, however, when it was perceived that Lord Melgrave was again about to speak.

He looked about him with dim, dreamy eyes, and there was something of drowsiness in his tones, as he said slowly and with effort: 'Gentlemen, we now approach the most important business of the evening; the very object, indeed, that has brought us together. I could wish that the post I hold was more worthily filled. I am only too conscious of my own incompetence. An institution of this importance well deserves a more capable and qualified, a more eloquent president than I can pretend to be.' (Here arose murmurs of 'No! No!') 'I make you my excuses; I tender you my regrets. I am old; I am ill; I feel that I have not long to live—but in that respect, of course, my case is not singular.' (He said this with an air of suddenly recollecting himself.) 'You will understand, however, that to the best of my ability I desire—I am most anxious—to serve you. The rank which is mine by inheritance constitutes, I am well aware, my only claim to occupy this chair: for in this England of ours the custom prevails of choosing presidents from the peerage. I am your chairman, then, simply because of the name I bear, the accident of my birth, my title, and social position; otherwise, I see at this table men who could far more becomingly and efficiently preside over your meetings. I will trouble you with but a few more words. In the centre of the table stands the symbol of our society and its aims: Mortality, with attendant conditions of Beauty, Grace, and Elegance. That is the Emblem of the Club: Death with Flowers. To that goal we would in turn hasten: not content to journey thitherward with the miserable tardiness, the dreary sluggishness which are the ordinary obligations and penalties of life. We would advance with alert action and quick step, not drag our limbs slowly after us as though unwillingly we were urged along a dreaded path.

We differ, I may point out, from other clubs. They ballot for entrance; we ballot for exit. We shall determine presently by lot the member who is privileged to depart from among us, and whose face, after this night, we shall not again look upon in life. He will go from us, I need hardly say, accompanied by our heartiest congratulations, our best wishes. It is understood that we do not oppress him with rules and formulæ. The exact manner of his abandonment of the burden of existence we leave to him to select. The club is composed, I need not remind you, of men of honour, refinement, and taste. We can unquestionably trust ourselves and each other; we need not be troubled with doubts and misgivings on that head. I propose that we proceed in the usual way. In one of the empty bronze vases upon the table will be deposited cards inscribed with the names of the members who are present; in the other vase will be placed tickets numbered 1 to 13. The youngest member present will officiate: with one hand he will draw a name, with the other a number. No. 13 is the winning number. This method of proceeding is authorised by the unwritten laws of the club, and has been found satisfactory in practice.'

'And he who draws No. 13?' asked Mr. Vane, in a whisper, of his friend.

'No. 13 will depart from amongst us, as his lordship has expressed it. No. 13 will set forth promptly upon his journey from this world to the next.'

While arrangements were in progress for the casting of lots described by Lord Melgrave, the gentleman sitting at the further end of the table, who had before attempted to speak, now found his opportunity, and addressed the assembly:

'I desire, with the permission of our noble chairman, to bring a matter of some importance—pertinent, I think, to the proceedings before us—under the notice of the club. I will for the present refrain from the mention of names. But at our last meeting, I may remind the club, it was decided in the customary manner that a certain member of our body should—in point of fact—if I may avail myself of the language of our great poet—who had given much study to the subject' (cries of "hear! hear!")—"shuffle off this mortal coil." Now, I don't desire to bring an absolute charge of breach of faith against any one. I may add, that I am the last man in the world to urge undue haste in the matters with which—in point of fact—the club is chiefly concerned. I think it right to mention, however, that the member in question has certainly not hurried himself. He can scarcely be said, indeed, to have complied with the conditions of his membership. In point of fact, I saw him only last week in Paris.'

'In Paris?—At the Morgue?' suggested one of the company.

'No, not at the Morgue. He was alive—very much alive. The subject is one of some delicacy. I may say, however, that in his case there had been talk of his suffering from what our great poet—if I may again refer to him—has ingeniously called "the pangs of despised love." But I found him married and apparently happy. He was, in point of fact, spending his honeymoon in Paris.'

This statement was received with amazement and evident perplexity.

There was a general feeling that something should be done; that the member in question should be made to understand that he had acted most improperly. He was alive, whereas he was bound to be dead. It was even suggested that legal proceedings should be taken against him. Illegal proceedings were also proposed. Mr. Serjeant Fell was appealed to. He occupied the office of honorary standing counsel to the club. But the learned gentleman was hardly in a position at the moment to offer advice of much worth. His appearance was disordered and inflamed; he had flung open his waistcoat and torn off his white cravat: he had been drinking deeply. He was understood to say, that although there had been a clear breach of contract, he did not think an action would lie; that a man was not bound to criminate himself; that it might be held that the objects of the club were, if not immoral, at any rate opposed to public policy; that it was questionable whether the club could be legally viewed as a corporate body and able to sue or be sued. Still, he thought a court of equity might possibly give relief, and decree specific performance, or award damages in default. In any case, he opined—dropping into a very intoxicated tone—that the devil would have the honourable gentleman all in good time, with a good many other people, including every member of that eminent society! Thereupon it was whispered that upon such a subject the learned serjeant was very likely to be particularly well informed. The chairman again rose.

Lord Melgrave, avoiding all reference to the remarks of the learned serjeant, observed that this was the first case of the kind that had ever occurred since the foundation of the club. There was no need for them, however, to arrive at an immediate decision; they might well adjourn their discussion of the matter until a future occasion. Possibly, the member who seemed to be in default did not really contemplate any breach of faith with the club, but merely desired a little more time for the adjustment of his affairs. That was unusual and, as a rule, undesirable. His lordship had been, he said, an advocate of promptness and punctuality in all matters throughout his life. Still, it was not expedient to apply a hard

and fast rule to a case that might prove to have something exceptional about it. 'It has been said,' his lordship observed, in conclusion, 'that love brought our absent member here in the first instance, and that he is now married. Well, we know that marriage also brings us recruits—perhaps even more than love. I make no doubt that we shall have good news of our friend before very long. He has deferred payment of his debt; but he will certainly pay it. Let us pass to the business of the evening.'

V.

IT was a nervous business, there could be no doubt about that, albeit attempt was made to disguise the fact. But there was an end now of laughing and jesting. Faces wore a serious look, smiles vanished, brows were knit even fiercely, lips were closely compressed; uneasy glances darted hither and thither.

'Is not the room very hot?' asked some one.

'Infernally hot. It's a bitterly cold night, too. But this room is perfectly stifling. I can scarcely breathe. It's the candles, I suppose.'

'Or the punch,' suggested Serjeant Fell. With a trembling hand he emptied his glass and refilled it.

Lord Melgrave was shaking the vases, that the cards they contained might be well shuffled.

'Mr. Vane, our youngest member, will kindly draw for us,' said his lordship. 'With a view to absolute fairness in the matter, he desires to be blindfolded. It is an unnecessary form; we have all of us, I am sure, the most perfect confidence in Mr. Vane; but it is his wish, so I hasten to comply with it.' And he bound a handkerchief over Mr. Vane's eyes.

'Is there not a strange rumbling sound?' asked the member who had before complained of the heat of the room; 'or am I troubled with a singing in the ears?'

'It's the wind getting up, perhaps.'

'Or a market cart jogging along to Covent Garden.'

'Or the punch, perhaps,' Mr. Serjeant Fell again suggested.

'Hush!'

Mr. Vane was about to draw the cards from the vases.

As he drew the cards, he handed them to Lord Melgrave. There was absolute stillness in the room. Everyone held his breath. All eyes were turned upon Mr. Vane.

'Mr. Serjeant Fell,' his lordship read aloud, and then threw the card upon the table, for anyone to inspect who listed. The number drawn to correspond with the card was twelve.

The second card bore Mr. Feverell's name; the third, Mr. Vane's own name. The numbers were five and nine respectively.

'Lord Melgrave,'—his lordship in firm tones pronounced his own name. He next read the number: 'Thirteen.'

No one spoke.

'At last!' said his lordship very quietly. 'I have usually met with ill luck at games of chance. Fortune favours me to-night. I rise a winner. Congratulate me, gentlemen.' He smiled pleasantly as he took a pinch of snuff from his superb box.

It was certain that a very strange noise was filling the house. A footman hurriedly threw open the door.

'Gentlemen,' he cried, 'we are in the greatest danger. The house is on fire! The room below is in flames; the staircase is threatened. It is necessary to escape immediately, or we shall be all dead men.'

Having thus delivered himself, the footman vanished.

Volumes of dense smoke poured into the room. It was thought well to close the doors again.

VI.

ALL rose from the table. Much confusion prevailed; there was something of panic even, with much uncertain hurrying to and fro. Various cries were heard: 'Order, order!' 'Adjourn the meeting!' 'Disperse!' 'Silence for the chair!' &c. &c. Lord Melgrave attempted to speak; but for some moments he could not make himself heard, the hubbub was so great.

Mr. Feverell proceeded to lock the doors, in the cause of order, as he said, and in support of the chair.

'Madman! What would you do?' cried several of the members. Mr. Feverell drew his sword.

'I act with my friend,' said Mr. Vane. 'I beg you to stand back, gentlemen,' and he took up his position by the side of Mr. Feverell. The smoke was now stealing beneath the door and through the crevices of the floor, filling the room.

'What is your pleasure, gentlemen?' Lord Melgrave was heard to demand. 'Is it the general wish that the meeting should stand adjourned *sine die*?'

'I move that the club be dissolved,' cried one of the company.

'Let us proceed in order,' said Lord Melgrave, as he took snuff. 'I appeal to you to preserve the peace of the meeting, to check all tendency to confusion. It is moved that the club be dissolved.'

Indeed, its dissolution appears imminent, hardly to be avoided upon any terms. But I am in the hands of the meeting. Gentlemen, I entreat you to be orderly, to recollect yourselves. At such a juncture, it is most necessary that we should show ourselves calm and composed—superior to the emotions of the moment, above the follies and weaknesses of the herd. Gentlemen,' he cried, raising his voice as the uproar increased on all sides of him, 'it cannot be that the members of the Cato Club fear to die !'

He was listened to no more. With a quiet smile he resumed his seat. He drew a small box from his pocket, swallowed two opium pills, and helped himself to a glass of wine.

A rush was now made to the doors. The two friends defended themselves, valiantly; but overpowered by numbers, exhausted and bleeding, they were presently hurled aside. Mr. Feverell had possessed himself of the keys, however, which he tossed through the window into the street. Endeavours were made to force the locks; failing this, by employing chairs as battering-rams, the panels were splintered and battered out. But the smoke poured in thick columns through the apertures; clouds of sparks filled the room. A terrible crash was heard: the staircase had fallen ! The house seemed now a mass of angry flame.

Escape was still possible—just possible—by the windows. These looked towards the street. It was perceived that an excited crowd had assembled without; there were the sounds of many voices, of strange cries, of the springing of watchmen's rattles. Someone had gone, it was said, to try and find the beadle, who was believed to have custody and control of the parish fire-engine.

Still, it was a dangerous leap from the windows to the pavement below, with an ugly iron palisade to escape. Hurriedly the damask cloth was dragged from the supper table; a wreck of food and flowers, plate and glass, wine and punch strewed and soiled the floor—the white death's head, the club emblem, grinning in the midst. The table-cloth, twisted rope-wise, was fastened to the balcony, offering a means of descent into the street.

But some had been unable to wait the completion of this proceeding. Urged by the crowd, who were holding out their arms invitingly, the poet had leaped from the balcony, to fall a contused and shattered mass in the road-way.

'His muse never soared very high,' observed Mr. Feverell. 'She will mount now, if ever again, upon a very broken wing.'

The traveller followed the poet; the dandy, the traveller; the soldier, the dandy. Then came a great roar from the crowd: Serjeant Fell, in his clumsy attempt to descend, had struck violently against the iron palisades.

'You are bleeding, Feverell,' said Mr. Vane to his friend. Mr. Feverell was holding to his lips a white handkerchief blotched with crimson.

'It's over with me, Vane. I received somehow an awkward sword-thrust in the left breast.' As he spoke, his mouth filled with blood.

'Gentlemen,' said Lord Melgrave, 'I entreat you to save yourselves. There is not a moment to be lost. The floor is yielding beneath our feet. I certify that you have acted most gallantly. But enough has been done for honour. Save yourselves, I implore.'

'And your lordship?' asked Mr. Vane.

'You forget. My position is not the same as yours. I am number thirteen. I remain.'

'I shall not quit your lordship.'

'Vane, I add my entreaties to his lordship's,' said Mr. Feverell. 'Save yourself. I am dying. Believe me when I say that, after all, life is worth living.'

'I remain here,' said Mr. Vane firmly, as he took up his position at the window. But he had scarcely spoken when, exerting all his strength, by a sudden effort Mr. Feverell seized him by the waist, lifted him in the air, and fairly tossed him over the balcony. He was caught by a hundred hands. He had escaped altogether uninjured.

When Mr. Feverell was last seen, his face wore a strangely radiant look. He waved his hand as though bidding adieu to his friend and to the world. A moment after, and huge puffs of smoke hid him from sight. Then came the flames bursting through the windows, crunching the wooden frames, and licking and blackening and blistering the brick-work and stone coping. The floor had fallen in. The total destruction of the house was inevitable.

There was an absolute end of 'The Cato Club.'

DUTTON COOK.

A Christmas Nightmare.

It was Christmas Eve. We were a merry party that year at Bury Grange, a lonely old-fashioned house situated in extensive grounds, about two miles from any habitable dwelling, while the neighbouring village was over three miles distant. The owner of this venerable residence was my elder brother, Richard Carew, a wealthy City merchant, who, when but a child of six years old, had suddenly become the principal partner in a large City firm through the death of an only uncle, in the prime of life, by a railway accident. Hence, my brother Richard grew up from childhood with wealthy surroundings, and in his twenty-second year took to himself a wife, who, if not possessed of riches, had, at any rate, what Richard considered a fortune in itself—good looks. Soon after his marriage, however, my mother, a genial kind-hearted woman, died of consumption; and as my father was now quite alone—I at the time being engaged in managing a large coffee plantation in India—it was resolved that Richard and his wife should take up their abode at Bury Grange.

Under this arrangement, the time glided quickly by, and nothing disturbed the equanimity or happiness of the old home, till, one day, my father, on reading in the *Times* newspaper of the failure of a well-known bank in which he had invested most of his money, was so heart-broken that he ever after lost all his spirits, and gave way to the most bitter grief. What followed, alas! was still worse; for in a few months' time it was clearly evident that his reason was failing him, and, although the first advice in the land was at once obtained, his brain, at last, hopelessly succumbed to the mental shock it had undergone. Happily, after this painful crisis, his life was not prolonged for any length of time; and one evening, as he was being led, like a helpless child, by Richard to his bed-room, on reaching the landing leading to what was known as the White Room, he suddenly gave a spasmodic cry, and fell dead in his son's arms.

Meanwhile I had a succession of favourable seasons in India; and, having amassed in consequence a good sum of money, determined, after an interval of ten years, to return to England; and by a happy thought on my part, I contrived to arrive at Bury Grange a few days before Christmas—my brother having insisted that I should consider his house my home so long as it suited my plans.

Once more in the dining-room, which, like an old friend,

seemed to welcome me back with its many associations, I was besieged by a merry group of little faces, each equally eager to make friends with Uncle Edward, about whom they had heard so much, and whose arrival they had been daily anxiously expecting. Everyone, too, took an unusual interest in my return ; as my brother and his wife had arranged that this Christmas should be celebrated at Bury Grange with unusual festivities, and for this end, a large number of guests had been invited. Indeed, no pains were spared to make the rejoicings worthy of the occasion ; and many an old custom was revived to give additional life to the festive doings in my honour. At length Christmas Eve came, and on that evening it was arranged that each one of the party in turn should tell a tale ; and as is generally the case on such occasions, the favourite subject was ghosts. There is no need, however, to weary the reader with the many strange things that some of the company had, at one time or another, experienced ; it being only necessary for our story that I should briefly narrate a curious statement which my brother made relative to one of the rooms in Bury Grange ; and which, odd to say, was at the time quite new to me, although, as I imagined, I had known the history of every inch of the house from my boyhood.

‘It may surprise you,’ said my brother, ‘to hear that one of the rooms in this house was supposed to be haunted. It was only on reading my father’s will, at his death, that I was aware of this fact, which evidently, for some reason or other, had been kept a strict secret. Indeed, I have often recollected since, that my father was always quite angry if any of his household were found in the White Room, as this, he said, was his own private room. When, however, it was my painful duty to peruse his will, the reason for his conduct was apparent ; and there is no doubt that the mystery attaching to that room exercised a morbid influence over him. Even to the very last hour of his life, in spite of his mental aberration, he seems to have had the same dread of the mystery attaching to this unfortunate room, having suddenly breathed his final breath when opposite its very door. As you will hear from the following extract of his will, once in his life he was the victim of some terrible delusion in respect to this room :—

‘“ Having from my youth upwards had a special predilection for what was antique, I was, one day, not a little pleased when I saw advertised for sale the freehold of Bury Grange. On making the necessary inquiries of a highly respectable firm of London solicitors, I was put in possession of the entire history of this old house, which, to my delight, I found to have been built over two hundred years. When the negotiations were nearly com-

pleted, I received from an unknown hand an anonymous letter bidding me 'beware of Bury Grange with its White Room.' I was quite at a loss to understand the meaning of this strange communication; and set off on the following morning to consult the solicitors as to its meaning. They at once said it was a hoax, and counselled me to take no notice whatever of what was simply intended to frighten me out of buying one of the most charming old freehold residences that had been in the market for sale for many a year. A week passed by, and the eventful day at length arrived when Bury Grange was to belong to me. It was a wet foggy day, but sooner than run the risk, even at the last moment, of losing what I had so eagerly set my heart upon, I started off for London, and, on my arrival at the solicitors' offices, found the party who were about to sell Bury Grange waiting for me. The business was soon transacted; and at seven o'clock the same evening, on my return home, I felt a proud sense of satisfaction at being the owner of what was universally acknowledged by competent authorities to be a very fine specimen of old English architecture. Instead, however, of finding my wife ready to receive me, I was informed that she was seriously indisposed and was reclining in her boudoir. On entering the room, I was upset at discovering her in a highly nervous state of excitement; and the reason was soon apparent, for on the table there was an open letter, of two sentences, to this effect:—'Once more, beware of Bury Grange with the White Room. An unhappy spirit wanders about there.' This was not a lively communication; but I put it down, like its predecessor, as a hoax, and consoling my wife, soon succeeded in allaying her nervous excitement. Happily, I received no more of these anonymous letters, and in a few months' time we were comfortably located in Bury Grange. As soon as the house was completed as far as its furnishing arrangements were concerned, we determined to have what is popularly known as a 'house-warming;' and when the evening arrived, I felt in a high state of excitement. Never, perhaps, in all its former history had Bury Grange looked more beautiful than it did that night. The dancing was kept up to one of the small hours in the morning, and as the last carriage drove away the hall clock struck two. Now, as soon as I had constituted Bury Grange my home, I made it my custom to go into every room the last thing at night; so, making no exception to this rule, I commenced my pilgrimage. The lights in the noble suite of reception-rooms had been extinguished; and on turning the keys, one by one, of the massive doors, I proceeded along the corridor and reached the White Room, which had been fitted up for the occasion as a card-room.

Here, by some accident, one of the windows had been left open ; and, much to my astonishment, I distinctly saw standing by the fireside the figure of a young girl dressed in white, with her golden hair hanging in dishevelled locks down her back. I naturally thought that she was one of the guests, but on drawing near was horrified to find that I was standing in the presence of—not flesh and blood—but a spirit. As long as my mortal life shall last, I can never forget the sight of that apparition. It will ever haunt me, it will never be effaced from my memory. From that night until the present moment it has been present in my mind's eye ; and at the time I wished that I had never put my foot in this ill-fated house. Oh ! the unspeakable anguish that was depicted on her face ! It makes me, too, shudder as I think of those sad tears that kept dropping from her sorrow-stricken eyes. And my heart beats as I see now vividly before me her thin little hand resting on her snowy swan-like breast. 'For God's sake,' I exclaimed, 'speak ! Say something ! Tell me who you are, and why you have come !' Indeed, I began to feel faint, and, as the room seemed to swim around me, a strong cold wind suddenly swept against me, and I was alone. 'Thank God,' I cried, 'it has gone !' My first fear, however, was lest the apparition should have passed along the corridor and entered another room—perchance that where my wife was. Quickly, therefore, nerving myself for any emergency, I put out the lights and locked the door of the White Room, resolving henceforth that no one must enter it, and that what I had seen must be a profound secret. My first duty was now to try and unravel, at any price, the meaning of this weird mystery, but in such a manner as to escape the knowledge of my wife. I knew it must be a costly business, but sooner than possess a house with a mystery attaching to it, I was willing to sacrifice both time, trouble, and expense. For some months the inquiry was carried on without any result whatever. No one could give the slightest clue to the mystery—parties who had lived in the house for years denying that they had either ever heard of, or seen, any ghost. The success of the investigation therefore appearing hopeless, I made up my mind to go on living at Bury Grange, and as a special precaution turned the White Room into a private study. Curious to say, from that day until now, while I am engaged in writing this my last will and testament, I have had no reason to regret my purchase of Bury Grange, as I have never received any more anonymous letters, nor been visited by another spiritual manifestation."

'It is evident, after hearing the extract of my father's will, that being a highly nervous man, he was made even more so by that wretched event which he has so carefully described. I will, however

for the satisfaction of those present, read a letter which I received three years ago, thoroughly clearing up, as it does, the mystery of Bury Grange:—

“I have but a short time to live, and before leaving this world am desirous of confessing a cruel and wicked hoax which I perpetrated, some years ago, on your father Daniel Carew. It is too late now to ask his forgiveness; but being anxious to relieve my mind of a heavy burden which it has secretly borne for so many years, I earnestly hope you—as his son—will forgive a dying man a sin of which he is truly penitent. Before my health broke down, I was a struggling solicitor in a small way of business. It so happened that, at the time your father purchased Bury Grange, I had a very wealthy client who was equally desirous of becoming its owner. It occurred to me that the only chance of driving Daniel Carew away was by representing Bury Grange as haunted. When, therefore, my two anonymous letters failed, I waited until the ‘house-warming’ took place before I renewed my efforts for frightening him out of his new possession. Seizing this opportunity, I waited until all the guests had gone, when, by a powerful magic-lantern, which I had previously placed on the roof of an outhouse adjoining the window of the White Room, I threw the reflection of the young girl into the dark room. I then remained, with no small excitement, until your father came to see all was right for the night. As soon as I saw he was frightened at my piece of wicked deception, I shifted the picture, thus making the figure appear to move. Any further attempt to carry out my secret design was, however, frustrated by the sudden death through an apoplectic fit of my client. It was impossible for me to confess the treacherous part I had played, as I knew your father would have quickly put the law in force against me; so my only plan was to let him live under the delusion that he had seen a ghostly visitor. Having thus frankly told you all, I ask your forgiveness, which, in the case of one who must soon quit this world, I know you cannot withhold.”

‘It is only necessary for me to add that I gladly forgave him the cruel injustice he had done to my poor father, taking into consideration that he was suffering from an agonising complaint, which each day was bringing him closer to the grave. At the same time, too, it was no slight satisfaction to feel that whatever mystery had attached to Bury Grange was now for ever dispelled.’

When my brother Richard sat down again, each one of the party felt a certain relief at the explanation he had given of the extract from my father’s will; and, although it was now getting late, the conversation was carried on until the clock struck twelve,

when, after many a hearty interchange of good wishes had been given, we each retired to rest, and I was much ridiculed at being the possessor of what was unanimously called the 'Haunted White Room.' Considering, however, what a traveller I had been, and in how many a lonely spot I had often been placed, I naturally laughed at the very idea of being frightened by a ghost, much less the ghost of a fair young damsel with golden locks flowing gracefully over a dainty white neck. 'No such good luck for me,' I jestingly answered my brother as he shut me in for the night. I was soon asleep, little contemplating any interruption to my night's repose. I was not allowed, however, to remain long undisturbed, for suddenly I was aroused from my slumbers by the creaking of the door, just as if some one had hold of the handle, and was deliberating whether he should come in or not. At first I thought that I must be the victim of that delusive malady nightmare, and commenced rubbing my eyes to find out whether I was really awake. Yes! I was awake—fully awake—of this there could be no doubt; and, moreover, I was not subject to nightmare, and why should I have it on this particular night? I at once drove such an idea from my mind, and meanwhile heard the persistent creaking of the door. There was a faint light in the room, as the moon, happening just now to be at its full, shone brightly through the window-blind, enabling me indistinctly to see across the room. Still I heard the steady creaking of the door, and had almost resolved to go and examine it for myself, when I saw it slowly open. This, even to an old weather-beaten traveller like myself, was not altogether a welcome sight, especially after hearing what had befallen my father in this very same room. I remained, therefore, perfectly quiet, keeping my eyes steadily fixed on the open door, and watching minutely its movement. A peculiar sensation, I grant, *did* come over me, as I presently saw a white figure make its appearance, and, after standing for a moment in one position, advance towards the bed. My inclination certainly was to close my eyes, but, retaining sufficient nerve to keep them open, I traced the mysterious figure as it silently made the circuit of the bed, and, after giving a heavy sigh, left the room. Once more alone, I began to breathe freely, and my first impulse was to make a dart out of bed and turn the key of the door. This resolve, brave as it might be, was of no use, for again the door opened, and my strange visitor entered afresh. As before, the figure stood still as if taking a calm survey of the room and its surroundings. Then a second time it approached my bed, and heaved a heavy sigh, and, after muttering some inarticulate words, vanished. This time I seized the opportunity, and, making a desperate rush for the door, turned the lock, and, with a sense of comfort, resolved to light a candle. Alas! the

servant had put no lucifers, and as the moon no longer shone in at the window, I was in complete darkness. My only resource, therefore, was to return to bed, and go to sleep as quickly as I could.

Just as I was beginning to doze, I again heard the persistent creaking of the door, but knowing that it was safely locked, I took no notice. As, however, I lay courting sleep, I distinctly felt the bed move, just as if some one from underneath was lifting it up. For a few minutes it again remained still, and I began to think that I was really suffering from a fit of nervousness. But all of a sudden it was raised up more than ever, and this time an unmistakable dread came over me. Accompanied, moreover, with this unpleasant motion, I heard what I thought was a deep snorting; thus giving me the impression that someone was secreted underneath, and that before the night was over I should be robbed—perhaps murdered—by a gang of burglars. At last my brain was so overwrought that I resolved to rouse the household. With one bound I unlocked the door, and used my natural voice to the best of my advantage. As the reader can easily imagine, there was very quickly a simultaneous unlocking of doors, and in a very short time nearly every member of the household might be seen making for the corridor. The result was that a general onset was made at my ill-fated room, when lo! what, after all, should be seen stretched out asleep under the bed, but our faithful old dog Judy! Awaking from her peaceful slumbers, she had tried to turn, and hence had caused that mysterious motion of the bed with which I had associated so many horrors. At this discovery there was a general laugh; but foolish as I might seem, I still requested, out of fair play, that the mystery of the figure which I had distinctly seen enter the room should be explained. Of course, everyone said I had been dreaming, and, in spite of my persistent denial to the contrary, refused to believe that I had been really awake. Happily for me, however, this mystery too was soon put right; for who should be seen coming up the stairs—walking in his sleep—but my brother Richard, whom his faithful dog had followed into my room. Having conducted him to his room, and seen him safely in bed again, we formed an impromptu cabinet council in the White Room, at which it was unanimously resolved to keep this second occurrence connected with the White Room as great a secret as the previous one had been, lest the shock should affect my brother's health and spirits. When, therefore, we met together on Christmas morning, by mutual consent nothing was said either of the Mystery of Bury Grange or of the Christmas Nightmare of the past night.

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